One Hour With Him

Monsignor Joseph L. J. Kirlin

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ONE HOUR WITH HIM

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ONE HOUR WITH HIM

"What? Could you not watch one hour with Me?"
(MATTHEW XXVI. 40)

BY

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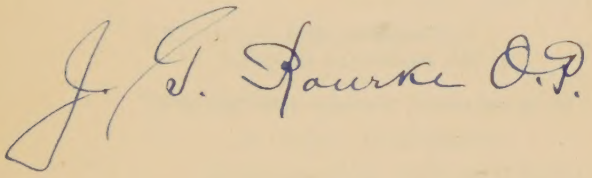

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PREFACE

The Eucharistic essays in the following pages were originally published in *Emmanuel*, the organ of the Priests' Eucharistic League, with the object of supplying suggestive thoughts and subjects for meditations and sermons at the devotion of the Holy Hour. They have been revised and many of them rewritten wholly or in part so as to serve as aids to private devotions before the Blessed Sacrament and for general spiritual reading.

The original purpose, however, has been kept in mind, and it will be found that each chapter easily lends itself for use as a complete discourse, or may be separated into the four general divisions recommended by the Ven. Father Eymard for the general practice of the Holy Hour: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. As the subjects, moreover, are taken from the devotions familiar to everyone, a way is opened to limitless fields of developing and amplifying the thoughts touched on in these pages.

Devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is the eloquent answer to the many crying needs of our times. There we learn from our Master lessons of love, obedience, patience and faithfulness, not academically, but from One who has lived it all as He would have us live, and lives it again over and over mystically in His sacramental life. It was because he saw in devotion to the Blessed Sacrament the surest means of restoring all things to Christ that Pius X of saintly memory was so urgent in furthering in every way the closest union of the faithful with our Eucharistic Lord. His successors, Benedict XV and our present Pontiff, Pius XI, have followed the same lines in

encouraging and aiding all efforts with this same high object.

Following these illustrious leaders it remains only for all—priests and people—to strengthen in their souls devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, where He so eminently shows His love for us, by showing our love for Him in frequent Holy Communions and visits to Him on the altar and by spreading and making known the rich results to us from the Holy Hour with Him.

"Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us." (I John, iv, 19.)

J. L. J. K.

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ONE HOUR WITH HIM

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CHAPTER I

THE VOICE FROM THE TABERNACLE

IN the long hours of the day Our Divine Lord waits in the Tabernacle. Outside the church there is much hurrying and the noise of feet passing swiftly, the sounds of motor cars and the din of traffic. Old and young, happy and unhappy, the pure and the vile, jostle one another in the procession of the world, their souls as different as their faces. Humanity they have in common, and all are weighted with burdens and all are laboring. Restlessly their eyes seek refreshment, from side to side they glance searching surcease; but "narrow is the way and strait the path and few there are who find it."

Within the church the favored ones kneel in adoration, and as their souls sink peacefully in the perfume of His Love and sigh and are at rest, they hear as at a great distance the murmur of the world's activities, and very, very near they hear the Sweet Voice from the Tabernacle.

"Come to Me all you who labor and are heavily laden, and I will refresh you." Come to Me you old, for I am older than the eternal hills, "before Abraham was made I am." Come to Me; you who are borne down with the weight of years and the cares of the years; I can refresh you, for I am bearing the weight of all the world. You are alone, your forebears have passed away and your contemporaries have gone from you one by one. There is no one to

understand, no one to know. Yet I can understand, I can know, I can help you carry the great burden. I can refresh you in the sympathy of understanding. I am as in the days of your youth, for in Me there is "no change or the shadow of change." Come to Me, you aged ones, and I will refresh you.

Come to Me you young, for I am Eternal Youth. All your young plans, all your dreams, all your hopes are known to Me who have known all the young of all the world. Bring me your aspirations, I can understand, for I do not change and am always young. Come to Me in the freshness of your young lives and I will refresh you. The pain of knowledge is breaking your young hearts, there are those who cannot see as you see. You are misunderstood, even by those who are dear to you. Ah! Come to Me, for I can understand. So was I misunderstood, so did men mock Me and My dreams, so did My heart ache at the lack of sympathy when I walked the earth, suspected and misunderstood. Come to Me, you young, and I will refresh you.

Come to Me, you who are sad, and I will refresh you. Is your heart wounded and maimed by false friends? Ah! I was betrayed by My friend, I was forsaken by My own. Come to Me, I understand and will refresh you. Bring Me the burden of your grief, bring Me the load of your sorrow, for I know. "All you who pass by the way, come and see if there be grief like unto My grief." Ah! I know. My heart was broken in the sorrow of the world, the weight of it was on Me; I know and understand, and I will refresh you. Are you sad because you are alone? I was alone on the cross. My friends forsook Me. My mother stood heart-pierced, but she could not help Me. My friend, Lazarus, died, and his sisters were heartbroken. I refreshed them and raised him up for them. Come to Me, for I know and understand human grief. I dried the tears of the widow of Nain and I rejoiced the heart of Jairus. Come, and I will refresh you.

Come to Me, you who are glad. Bring Me your joy and share it with Me. I, too, am glad, the whole world is My

Magnificat. The birds are My songsters and the flowers My hymn of joy. I know and understand, come and play with Me. Bring Me your merry hearts, bring Me the burden of your gladness, and I will refresh you.

Come to Me, you saints of the earth. Come to Me, you patient suffering ones, and I will refresh you. I understand; I know. I lived with My mother and St. Joseph, and I know how the indifference of the world about God and holy things pains you. I know how your virtuous hearts grieve at the blatant vice in the world about you. So it was, too, when I lived in Nazareth. Bring Me the burden of your unselfish resignation, your patient prayers, your long vigils and fasts, for I know and understand what expiation means. Come to Me, you saints, and I will refresh you.

Come to Me, you sinners, and I will refresh you. I know what is in man. I know the evil you would not that you do, and the good you would that you do not. Come to Me, do not shrink from Me, ashamed. I died for you, and all my sufferings were for the sins that now bear you down. I am no stranger to sin. I was wrapped in it as in a mantle in Gethsemane. I saw all the hideous redness of it there, and I sweated blood at the horror of it. Bring Me the burden of your sins, the weight of your follies. Come to Me, for I know "the depth, the dream of your desires, the bitter paths wherein you stray." Come to Me as Magdalene came—on her knees—full of love, and hear Me say to you as I said to her: "Much is forgiven you, for you have loved much."

"Come to Me, all you who are heavily burdened." . . . Who is not heavily burdened? Who can say the cry is not for him? In it is a very snare of love, a very beguilement of love. He begs us to come and be refreshed, so that when for refreshment we shall crawl with our last ounce of strength to Him, and then find His love that has called us, lift us up and hold us to His breast, ensnared we shall see the joy of Him as He possesses us—this Great Lover of all the world!

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CHAPTER II

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

THE Most Precious Blood of Our Lord, the price of our redemption! When we meditate on these words we wonder at the prodigality with which Our Lord spent that divine treasure for us. It is the same infinite prodigality shown in all His creations. His marvelous love for men has no bounds and the externization of that love in His works is marked with a generosity that is without limit. It was so from the very beginning of His creations. The simple narrative of the first chapter of Genesis carries with it an eloquent commentary on the boundless love of God for His creatures. As a lover gives all his genius, time and labor to forming and shaping a gift for his beloved, so our great God in His infinite love moulded and shaped the world for us. The globe that whirled out of space and fell into its place in the celestial procession of the universe was to be the home of man, who was to be created little less than the angels; therefore, its surface was divided into lands flanked and protected by the great seas. That land was clothed with verdure springing as the ages passed into mighty forests. Then these primeval forests, by cataclysm of earthquake and submerging seas, were buried in the depths of the earth. New verdures grew again in forests, the home of mighty creatures, which were each to play its own part in the economy of preparation for the coming of man. Deep in the earth, divine alchemy converted the sunshine stored in its subterranean tomb into the mammoth coal beds and lakes of oil, that were later to be brought to the surface and give back to man the warmth-

giving and health-making illuminants and medicaments formed of the pristine sunshine of those past aeons. In the ages since, that same golden sunshine has bathed the world from pole to pole up to this very day in life-giving health-making warmth, as it penetrates every nook and corner in its daily march across the earth. Such is God's prodigality to man in utilities.

Man, however, was to be gifted with intelligence. It was not enough that the healthy existence of his body should be provided for, there must be beauty in the world to satisfy his spiritual nature. Therefore the chemistry of the ages, by volcanic action and through powerful forces, stored in the crevices of the hills and mountains precious stones and metals that would serve and please the artistic nature of man.

As the ages passed bringing closer the time when in God's Providence man was to appear, by gradations the various species of living things lost the gigantic stature that they had possessed and became in nature and form such as to be of use to man. In like manner also, the great trees and flowers and ferns became through various stages of a size such as would serve him. We can read the history of these changes in the pages of the world's rocks, or even see these changes for ourselves in the survivals of those first forms, as in the great redwood trees of California, the monster firs of the Himalayas and the Gargantuan flora of the tropics. When man came he found a Paradise prepared for his every want of soul and body, a world of beauty and utility. His ungracious disobedience did not bring the merited destruction of all this beauty and utility as it well might have by the Creator, and fallen man went out to his life of penance into a world that proclaimed in the loudest tones on all sides God's gracious bounty and care for man. The heavens and the earth proclaimed His glory and thereby made man's penance more bitter. Undiminished by the continued ingratitude of man has been God's most bountiful prodigality towards

him. "Good must diffuse itself," and now as through those past ages, the miracle of Springtime carpets the earth with verdure jeweled with most perfect forms of beauty that appeal to every sense. Whether it be the luxuriance of tropical vegetation, the lonely edelweiss in the snows of the Alps, hidden violets in the deepest dell of the dark forests or the delicate tracery of the humble ferns by neglected waterside—all proclaim God's love for man as loudly as the mighty planets rushing through space guided by His hands. The myriad life of the world from the Brobdingnagian reptiles and animals on land and in the sea, to the tiniest insect that busies itself in preserving its life, each displays perfection that shows the Divine Artificer, each has its duty towards man, each shows forth by its very life and the mechanism of that life so far beyond the skill of human ingenuity, its part in the great plan that culminates in man.

When in the fullness of time His great love brought God Himself amongst men, He gave Himself with that same infinite prodigality that characterizes all His relations with man. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" —If man was to be redeemed by His Precious Blood there must be no stinting even of that treasure. Redemption must be as bountiful as creation. As a playwright carefully plans each scene, makes every incident and all words lead up to the dénouement of his play, so as He lived amongst men, did every act and word of the thirty and three years lead up to the great climax, the redemption of the world by the shedding of his Precious Blood for love of man.

The "little gray leaves" of the garden were the first to know the sacred touch of that Precious Blood. From overwrought veins swollen in a horror of revulsion at the awful vision of sin coming down over Him and covering Him as a horrid cloak, His life blood left its natural channels and finding vent in the pores of His body, gathered like dew on His white skin and as it fell to the ground,

reddened the olive leaves that carpeted His lonely retreat. The Great Act had begun, and that Precious Blood was soon to be scattered about as if it, of all creation, had no value. These jewel drops had not yet dried during the wearisome comings and goings in the mockery of justice that forced Him before the tribunals of His enemies, when the pagan Pilate gave the signal for the shedding of His blood to begin again. Soldiers stripped to the waist, first twirled their great knotted whips to practice their marksmanship, and then into that white body gleaming in the morning light of the courtyard, the thongs swished and whistled like hungry snakes and the crimson flood flowed afresh. Tossed from the whips those jewelly drops were flung to the walls; they clung to the pillar and glistened on the bodies of the soldiers. Soon the white flesh was so torn and seamed that "from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet there was no soundness in Him." A filthy cloak was thrown over His bleeding shoulders and a crown of thorns placed on His head in derision which the pagan soldiers pressed until the scarlet of His Precious Blood stood in kingly circle on His sacred forehead. . . . Into the hot dusty streets went the procession, the central figure borne down beneath the weight of the great cross. As His wearied steps approached nearer and nearer to the Hill of Death, the spilling of His Precious Blood marked the way and made it sacred for all the ages. On Veronica's napkin printed in His blood He left a memorial of her kindness that stood out in all the heartbreaking cruelty of those hours. . . . Stretched on the cross, from His pierced hands and feet came the precious stream crimsoning the nails and the cross itself. So dies our King for us, in royal generosity parting with His great treasure, in kingly prodigality showering abroad His life's blood for love of man.

Calvary was not the end of our King's munificence. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same" the crimson glory of His Precious Blood sweetens

the earth in the Holy Mass. In stately temples, in massive cathedrals, in the sheds of the African and in the igloos of the Esquimos that same Precious Blood is shed with divine impartiality. Just and unjust, saints and sinners are signed with it in Holy Communion. Tongues that praised and tongues that scorned are washed alike in their penitence by that saving blood. Lips that praised and lips that cursed are reddened with the blood of the Savior. That blood which fell in the streets of Jerusalem, clung to the walls and whips, made holy by its touch the nails and wood of the cross, makes holy again in each Communion the sinful clay of His creatures and raises their bodies to be temples of divinity. So it will be to the end. Always the Precious Blood, a crimson cloak for a sinful world will make that world a lovable thing to our God. A regal canopy between God and man, it will still save the world, until He comes in power and majesty and we see Him face to face.

CHAPTER III

OUR BLESSED LADY

HOW feeble are all our words of adoration of our great God. The heavens and earth proclaim His glory as it ought to be proclaimed indeed, but how very unworthy representatives are we of His articulate creation. Yet we can come to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament with great courage to express our adoration if we come with His holy mother, the one of all creation who can almost adequately adore Him.

When the great miracle had taken place which brought God to dwell in her body, her whole heart filled with joy gave itself in adoration of Him whom she sheltered. When the golden day came that she held Him in her arms in Bethlehem, she adored Him with the splendid strength of her mother love. In the days of Nazareth when He "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men" never was there an instant that her loving adoration ceased. It was the one thought of her life as He grew to manhood, and her motherhood pride was secondary to her adoration of Him her God. When He had gone from the quiet life of Nazareth into the turmoil of the world her adoration remained unabated. In the dark days she adored Him still when others mocked and His own fled from Him. She adored Him with her heart pierced with a sevenfold sword of sorrow to the very end, when the ignominy of the cross was crowned by the glory of His death. In joy and sorrow her adoration was the same. Here is the lesson for us. When sorrow comes it is not easy to adore and praise Him.

When the cross bears heavily on us, let us adore and praise Him who bore His cross for us.

What can we say to thank our loving God for His great gift to us? For life, for the beauty of the world we live in, for the comfort of love and friendship? How can we thank Him for giving us Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, for coming to us in Holy Communion? How weak are our words alone, but how acceptable they are when we join them to the thanksgiving of His holy mother.

Not content with her adoration of the great treasure hidden in her holy body she went the long tiresome journey to St. Elizabeth to share her joy and gratitude. "He who is mighty hath done great things to me," she cried out in grateful rejoicing. He had done great things to her, she must do great things to others. Her gratitude to God made her active in doing good to all men. God's love for her was the stimulus of her love for humanity. This is a great lesson to us. We must forgive because God forgives us; we must love others because God loves us. How sweet it is to spread God's goodness to ourselves by doing good to others!

What a grateful love was Our Blessed Lady's for Our Divine Lord when she lived in such close union with Him in Nazareth during His boyhood and manhood. How thankful that she could hold Him in her arms, a tiny babe; that she could look in His eyes and touch His hands when He was with her a growing boy; that she could sit at table with Him and converse with Him as He grew into manhood. Yet we can do more. We can each day, if we wish, not merely sit by Him and touch Him but actually receive Him into our bodies in Holy Communion. How grateful we should be, how careful to prepare, how anxious to thank Him when He is with us. The Blessed Virgin was the purest of all creation, and her heart was so full of absorbing thanksgiving that she was chosen and permitted to be in union with her God, living with Him. What wonderful gratitude she would have known if He could

have again lived in her body as He had once before lived, but she must be content in those days to sit near Him and look at Him or touch His holy hands.

We are scarred with the wounds of sin, we are soiled with the dust of life, yet we can do what the Blessed Virgin could not then do, we can receive Him body and soul into our bodies in Holy Communion. In wordless wonder at this great privilege let us ask her to thank Him for us, for we are powerless to do this as it should be done.

To meditate on the return God's rational creatures make to Him for His wonderful and continued favors fills us with shame for ourselves and our fellow men. Not only for the millions of ignorant pagans who know nothing of Our Lord, nor for the studied contempt and scoffing of those who miscall themselves Christians, but for those who belong to the true Church and are the specially favored among men, do we bow our heads in shame. How little our love and praise seem to us beside the silence, the ignorance and open rebellion of the throngs who do not love and who do not care. Yet knowing Our Lord as we do and realizing the desires of His human nature, we may console ourselves with the thought that our praise and our love serve as reparation to Him for some of this neglect, especially when we unite our loving gratitude to the love of His holy mother and come with her to His sacred feet with our homage.

It is no new tale to Him that multitudes prefer to crowd the streets and theaters and seek gayety and pleasure, rather than come to Him in the Blessed Sacrament. When He walked the earth there were very many also, who would not pause in their way to give Him a second thought. Many who heard of His wonders, nay, had perhaps been healed or fed by Him and yet would not listen to the golden words of His discourses. There were many who hated Him, and baited and contradicted Him and worked evil against Him. There were many who did not understand or want to understand. All this hurt His loving

heart, but in the thought that always there was one who knew and understood and loved was His comfort. Men took up stones to cast at Him; men said He had a devil. But the loving understanding of His mother took away the sting.

The man of inept hands, or lack of education, or physical deformity which makes him the butt of the thoughtless in his workshop or in the streets, who finds solace in the understanding love of a mother, or wife, or sister, is able to endure. The woman who has sacrificed her life and ambition for the support of parents, brother, or sister, may have to suffer the jeers and mockery of an unknowing world, but she is comforted and compensated by the grateful love of those who know the secret of her life.

In an infinitely higher manner Our Blessed Lady's understanding love made reparation to Our Lord, even in the dark days. With her we can confidently come to Him and console Him and make reparation by our faithful loving prayers and acts, for the ungrateful sinners of the world and for our own imperfections and sins.

How much we have to ask for! How much we need! But how can we come to our great infinite God with our petty trials, with our human requests? Let us think for a moment. It is He Himself who asks us to come. "Come to Me all ye who labor and are heavily burdened." Surely we all have these credentials. We are heavily burdened with the trials and difficulties of our life. We labor handicapped by the weakness of our nature. We have then the open sesame to the remedy He has promised: "And I will refresh you."

Do we still hold back lest our needs are too human and paltry? Then let us think of that first miracle of His in Cana of Galilee. It was the petition of Our Blessed Lady that caused it. How human that was and how paltry it seemed. It was no important vital thing that was lacking, not meat or bread, nothing that was essential to the meal. The failure of the wine, however, would cause confusion

to the young married couple, they would be criticized as niggardly and the meal served by them as incomplete. Mary's woman-heart saw and understood, and by her petition these people were saved humiliation and His first miracle was wrought, though His time had not yet come. Her mother-heart is as careful and as loving for us as for those folk of Cana. With her asking for us and with us we cannot be refused. On Calvary almost His last utterance were words recommending us to her; there she was made our mother indeed. With great courage we can come to Him now, if we come with His mother and lay bare before Him all our needs and confidently ask for the favors of soul and body that we desire. Nothing is small or insignificant that concerns us when we ask with His mother. In the closing of the time we spend with Him He will give us great gifts to take away with us as kings do always. He is more than king, His mother is our mother so we can be very familiar and ask Him what we wish. . . . Children ask their loving father for what he knows they need and he grants their request, flattered by their confident love.

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CHAPTER IV

OUR LADY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

IN the Luxembourg Gallery at Paris there hangs a picture painted by Dominique Ingres, which shows an altar spread with linen cloths; in the center on a corporal stands a golden chalice surmounted by the paten, on which in an upright position is the Consecrated Host. At each end of the altar there is an attending cherub, one trims a burning lamp, while the other, with deepest reverence showing in his face and attitude, holds a thurible. The central figure of the picture is Our Blessed Lady standing with clasped hands. Her eyes are cast down as she gazes on the Host, and in the beautiful face there is expressed such love, such dignity and such pride that one knows at once that she is His mother, and that she is adoring with loving pride, her Son and her God, in the Blessed Sacrament.

In just such loving mother-pride she looked and worshiped that night in Bethlehem, when the centuries of waiting were ended and He dwelt amongst us; and in the pink fleshed babe she held to her bosom, she adored her God, made Man. Such a look the shepherds and kings saw, as they knelt before Him, and the angels as they hovered round Him.

In the golden years of Nazareth when He was her hidden treasure, St. Joseph often saw her face thus lighted with pride and love, as she looked up from her tasks to see Him busy in His labor or at play.

In the years when she had to share Him with the world, always she was with Him in spirit; but there must have

been a wistfulness in her eyes as she waited for Him to come to her, away from the unbelief and selfishness and cruel hatred of the world He had come to save—to come to her, His faithful loving mother, who always understood. What a relief these visits must have been to His human heart. The blundering Apostles did not understand, and must have been at times very trying. They loved Him, indeed, and believed, but their ears were set for the sound of the trumpets that would usher in His earthly triumph and make Israel free. They were bewildered by His parables and by His forbearance of injury, and they were irked by His delay in manifesting Himself. Not until they saw His risen body did they begin to know, and not until the Pentecostal Spirit filled their souls did they know and believe fully and completely. His mother knew always, and always believed and always understood.

The dark days came, and the sword of sorrow pierced that loving Immaculate Heart—for she was united in spirit with Him, her Son and God, and her soul saw Him and His shame and pain, as clearly as the eyes of her body saw Him in the dusty street weighed down by the great cross, and on Calvary, His bruised body nailed to the cross, the sacred body she held in loving farewell before it was laid in the tomb. Like her three days loss of His childhood, were the three days loss of His manhood before the Easter Morn, when once more He was with her, glorious, risen from the dead, His body immortal and transfigured, never to be separated from her again.

During the forty days that followed He was with her. After the Ascension, began the sacramental union that was to be completed by her Assumption to Him in heaven. Who can put into words the life of Our Blessed Lady after the Ascension,—the days of her Holy Communion with Him in the Blessed Sacrament!

When the heartbroken Apostles returned from Olivet, whence He had gone from them, and even the angel's words could not comfort them, the womanly tact and

sweet resignation of His mother consoled them. We can fancy her feminine diplomacy pointing out to Peter the proofs of Our Lord's forgiveness for his denial of Him, and to the others, the various incidents of the forty days that showed He had forgiven them. But even fancy must fail to paint the picture of the first time that Peter, in obedience to the command "Do this in commemoration of Me," took the bread and the chalice in his hands, scarred and blunted by his work with nets and sails, and did That, the Great Act. . . .

Oh! the silence of that upper room—the sobs of penance, the heart deep prayers that angels carried away, when the words were said and He, their Beloved, was with them again, for the White Thing in Peter's hands was not bread, but the veiled living body of their Friend. Oh! the humility and love of them after He was received into their bodies, and they spoke their sorrow and hope to Him.

Ingres's picture makes us almost know the thoughts of Our Blessed Lady then. The proud loving look was in her eyes and all the years fell away, for the bare room was Bethlehem to her again and the helpless Host was her helpless Babe, and so she took Him to her heart in Holy Communion, and in those precious moments lived over again with Him the days when she held Him in her arms, and the golden years, and the red days. Then He was gone, but He would return, as He had come and gone in the forty days. The flying hours passed until her next Holy Communion. The keenest joy is in anticipating happiness and thus Our Blessed Lady lived the years from Communion to Communion, the days gladdened by anticipation and thanksgiving, between the moments when He was with her. Her life on earth was a mirror reflecting Him in whom are all men and things. The Apostles and the early Church looked to her as model and inspiration, and she did not fail them. When in the fullness of time she was united with Him in heaven, her position was established as Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. As she was

to the early Church so she is to us—our model and inspiration of preparation and thanksgiving for our Holy Communions,—our guide and aid in our visits to Our Lord—His mother and ours.

CHAPTER V

ST. JOSEPH

OUT of all the righteous men of Israel in his day, St. Joseph was selected by a special Providence for his important position in the life of Our Lord. He fulfilled the duties of that exalted state in humble faithfulness and earnest conscientiousness. As the angels were tested before they were confirmed in grace and as our first parents were tested, so God tested St. Joseph severely after the return of the Blessed Virgin from the home of St. Elizabeth. He was much troubled by the circumstances as they appeared to him; but his sense of justice prevailed even before he received the assurance of the angel, and he came out of the trial triumphant and bent all his efforts to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Sweet to him were the difficulties that arose in fulfilling his duties on the way to Bethlehem and during the momentous days there, for they were an opportunity of showing forth his love for the Babe and His mother. No easy task was set him when "the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in sleep saying: Arise and take the Child and His mother and fly into Egypt and be there until I shall tell thee" (Matthew ii. 13). This meant giving up his trade and customers, so necessary for the support of the family, leaving his kinsfolk and beginning all over again in a strange land. But it was the will of God and that was enough for St. Joseph to know, "who arose and took the Child and His mother by night and retired into Egypt." Always there was for St. Joseph in Egypt and afterwards in Nazareth the joy of being near Our Lord and working for

Him. This eased his toil, lightened his labors, and strengthened him in all his endeavors.

Twelve golden years full of this heavenly gladness, and then came the separation. What dread thoughts were St. Joseph's that evening on the returning journey from Jerusalem when he found that his divine charge was not with the company! How he racked his mind in endless questionings as to how and why this had happened. Had he failed in anything of his duty? Was this a punishment for his pride in his divine possession? Though his conscience acquitted him, yet he was tortured with the fear that he might have failed in his trust. He was grievously troubled but there was no panic in his soul, no hysterical moaning at his loss. Instantly he set about finding Our Lord and his search was rewarded. In the long years that followed there was no interruption in the celestial intercourse of the Holy Family. Days of toil they spent together and in the quietness of the evening there were walks to the brow of the hillside on which the village was built.

Travelers in the Holy Land are always enthusiastic over the beauties of the little valley of Nazareth and declare it the loveliest spot in all Palestine. Its verdant meadows watered by cool springs and the prolific gardens of fig and olive, orange and pomegranate trees in fruit and flower make it still in springtime a place of delights though it has lost much of the beauty that marked it in the days Our Lord lived in the little town nestling against the mountainside. What thoughts were in the mind of each of the Holy Family as they rested after the day's heat and looked on the landscape spread out before them in the softness of the twilight. "Jesus could in one glance embrace all that territory He had come to conquer; to the north the mountain peaks of Libanus and Hermon, covered with eternal snows; to the east Mount Thabor like a dome of verdure; then the deep river bed of the Jordan and the high table lands of Galahad; from its southern side the

plains of Esdralon reached out from His feet as far as the mountains of Manassah; on the west was the sea and Carmel with its many reminders of Elias."[1] Our Lord must have thought of the days when all the peace of Nazareth would be a memory, and He a wanderer with "no place to lay His head," would preach golden words to the unheeding multitudes, who, after they had been fed and healed, would forget it all and cry out for His blood. His mother and St. Joseph in the sympathy that held them close would feel the sadness of His heart, and see in the slowly descending darkness a symbol of the days they would spend without Him, their Sun of Gladness. But their prayers of praise and resignation mingled as they returned to their home for the night's rest which would be followed by a bright day of happiness even as the dark days to come would be but a prelude to their united eternity in the brightness of God Himself.

The days and years slipped by until His Father's business could wait no longer. The acceptable time grew nearer and so drew near the end of St. Joseph's duty. The sword of sorrow was for Mary's soul alone, and she, Queen of Martyrs, must not have the consolation of St. Joseph's great heart to help her. Not for St. Joseph was the coming and going of the Three Years nor the horrors of Calvary. He was the saint of the commonplace, the saint of the home and family life, the saint and model of the ordinary humdrum workaday life of the majority of mankind. There came a day when in the arms of Jesus and Mary whom he had guarded so faithfully and lovingly, his spirit loosed itself from the flesh and went to join the elect, to wait with them the Eastern Morn when his eyes, closed by the Angel of Death in a lingering look on his Beloved, would see Him blazoned with the heraldry of love in hands and feet and side.

St. Joseph is known and loved as the patron of a happy death, but he is, too, the patron of a happy life. Like

[1] Fouard's *Christ the Son of God,* Vol. I, p. 80.

St. Joseph, every Catholic is the guardian and protector of Our Lord and His mother. Their honor is in our hands, and it is our blessed privilege to respect and love them and protect them by our care from the hardships of the unbelievers. Intimate as was the life of St. Joseph with Our Lord, ours is even more so. We have Him with us always in the Blessed Sacrament, so that we can be in His company as often and as long as we wish. The Gospel says: "He went down with them and was subject to them." Ah, how far down He comes with us! Down to the depths of our ignorance, our ingratitude, coldness and carelessness, even down to the depths of our repented sins. And He Who "was subject to them" the stainless ones, is at the beck and call of us sinners. Are we distressed and sorrowful? He waits us in the tabernacle eager to aid us. Are we sick? He comes to us through the city streets amidst the unknowing and unloving as He went to the daughter of Jairus and Peter's mother-in-law. What a slave of love He is to us! St. Joseph had Our Lord as a fellow worker, so can we have Him with us all the day to make our work lighter and all toil sweet in His company. Proud and happy was St. Joseph to hold Our Lord in his arms and touch His flesh and sit beside Him in sweet converse. He comes into our very hearts in Holy Communion. St. Joseph dwelt under the same roof with Our Lord: but to us He promised "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him" (John vi. 57). Not even his close intimacy with Our Lord kept off sorrow and trial from St. Joseph, nor will it from us. But for us and for him this close intimacy brings clear vision of God's will and strength to come triumphant through the trials He sends us. The Angel of God's Church comes to us with God's commands, and though they mean the difficulties of a flight into Egypt, yet must we, as St. Joseph, rise up and obey. St. Joseph had the privilege of supplying food and shelter and raiment for the Divine Child. We have the same privilege when by our contribu-

tions to the altar and sanctuary societies of our parish, or to missionary societies, we are allowed to share in providing vestments and ornaments and utensils for His service; and blessed indeed are we if we are permitted to help in building a house for Him.

As to St. Joseph, so to even the most devoted lover of Our Lord and most faithful there comes a Three Days' loss. Our prayers seem dry and useless, the Mass fails to satisfy, and even Holy Communion brings no solace. We have lost Him! No, He is but trying our faith, and if we do not lose heart and sit with idly hanging hands repining and sad with self-blame, but like St. Joseph rise up and seek Him diligently, we shall surely find Him. Not indeed amongst our kinsfolk and acquaintances, not in the busy haunts nor in the city streets, but we shall find Him where St. Joseph taught us to find Him—"in the midst of the doctors in the temple." Our doctors in the temple are our confessor and spiritual director, and they will teach us that we must go on saying our accustomed prayers, hearing Mass and receiving Holy Communion even though it may seem useless and only out of habit. And when the three weary days that seem endless do end, lo, He is with us again and we rejoice.

One special mark of St. Joseph we must keep before our eyes as fruit of our intimacy with Our Lord. The Gospel says of St. Joseph only that "he was a just man." There is a great need in these days for us to cultivate through nearness to Our Lord a sense of justice that we may try to save the world from the chaos of rampant injustices which go unremedied and almost unrebuked. The injustice of class arraigned against class and creed against creed in bitter conflict; the injustice of sundered marriage ties that bring disaster to countless innocent children; the injustice of child labor that robs children of their childhood, stunts and deforms these, parents of the next generation, and brings an endless aftermath of evil to family and State; the injustice of parents' rights abrogated by the

State; and injustice of greedy capital that robs and oppresses the poor; and the injustice of labor that curtails man's right and liberty to earn his daily bread. It is a heartbreaking litany in these days of our boasted civilization, and there is great need for prayer to and imitation of St. Joseph, Patron of the Family Life, for on the family depends the stability of the State and in the school of the home only are learned the lessons of citizenship of this world as well as of God's kingdom.

For this reason Christ's Vicar proclaimed St. Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church, and it is for us to take that patronage very seriously and in our lives live out his life with Christ. The days and years will slip away and there will come to each of us a day when the Angel of Death will come to touch our busy lives into silence. God grant our dying to be a happy one, with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph with us in our last agony, so that our eyes closed in death will open to see Him, Our Risen Savior, waiting to reward a life spent, like His foster father's, in faithful service.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEATITUDES

IN the freshness of a spring morning in the second year of Our Lord's public life He stood on the plateau midway down the mountain at whose top He had spent the night in prayer. About Him were the twelve whom He had chosen that very morning from the devoted disciples who had formed themselves into a guard of honor to escort Him from place to place and minister to His needs. Very proud and bright-faced were the favored Apostles, for He had given them "power to heal sickness and to cast out devils" (Mark iii. 14, 15), and had selected them that they "should be with him and that he might send them to preach." Elated in their new prestige, they grouped themselves around Him, as already there had gathered, in spite of the early hour, "a very great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast both of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and be healed of their diseases. And all the multitude sought to touch him, for virtue went out from him and healed all" (Luke vi. 17-19). It was surely an inspiring sight that the new eastern sun lighted that morning on the green mountain-side. Never before had Our Lord such a large and representative audience. He had traveled much in the previous months and done many wonders and His name and works had been discussed eagerly in the market places and on the roads. Those who had first-hand information, who could say they had seen Him cast out the vendors in the temple or had heard His sermon in the synagogue of Capharnaum, shone with reflected glory. Local news got

about as fast or faster in those days than in our own that depends on the printed page. So the cure of Simon's mother-in-law and of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethsaida and His other healings had caused great excitement. Curiosity and self-interest had brought most of the great crowd to the foot of the mountain at dawn to await His appearance that they might receive succor from Him. It was Our Lord's opportunity to put before them His doctrines, to give them not only the physical relief they sought but also to feed their souls, and teach them the lesson of His coming amongst them. "And when he was set down his disciples came unto him. And opening his mouth he taught them saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you untruly for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matthew v. 1-12).——"But woe to you that are rich for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled for you shall hunger. Woe to you that now laugh for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when men shall bless you for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke vi. 24-26).

In utter amazement the multitude listened to this strange and startling doctrine. They had expected some soothing commentary on the Scripture, some platitudes that would please their vanity, some glorification of themselves as the chosen people. It was very upsetting to hear such plain talk, so revolutionary to all their beliefs and tradi-

tions. He saw their consternation as they looked into one another's eyes. "Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew v. 17). It was very bewildering to hear that the fulfillment of the law and prophets should be in meekness, in suffering, in forgiveness, and humility. All their teaching and traditions had been just the opposite. And here was One Who had proved Himself in miracles beyond question, Whose very face and mien were such as to command obedience and respect, arraigning all that tradition. "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment, but I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." . . . "You have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you not to resist evil." . . . "You have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Matthew v. 21-22-38, 39, 43, 44), and so on through that wonderful exposition of Christianity that we call the Sermon on the Mount.

As they listened and looked on the majestic countenance of Our Lord "teaching as one having power and not as the Scribes and Pharisees," so sure of Himself, so confident of His truth, so tranquil, they fell under the charm of the love in His eyes and the sweetness of the voice that thrilled their very souls and won their intellects so that "it came to pass that when Jesus had fully ended these words the people were in admiration of His doctrine" (Matthew vii. 28-29).

Alas, in the hearts of many who had been so favored in hearing Our Lord that morning the seed He sowed fell by the wayside and on stony ground and among thorns, but there was also much that "fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit that grew up and increased and yielded one thirty, another sixty and another a hundred"

(Mark iv. 8). As these went seriously and silently to their homes, there must have come to their minds by contrast the thought of that other mountain where the Law had been promulgated amidst thunder and lightning. From the Scriptures read to them in the Temple and their synagogues and from the learned discourses of their doctors that scene was very familiar to them. "In the third month of the departure of Israel out of the land of Egypt . . . Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said: Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel . . . and let them be ready against the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai, and thou shalt appoint certain limits to the people round about, and thou shalt say to them: Take heed you go not up into the mountain and that you touch not the borders thereof: everyone touching the mount dying he shall die. No hand shall touch him but he shall be stoned to death or shall be shot through with arrows, whether it be beast or man he shall not live. When the trumpet shall begin to sound, then let them go up into the mountain . . . And now the third day was come and the morning appeared and behold thunders began to be heard and lightning to flash and a very thick cloud to cover the mount, and the noise of the trumpet sounded exceeding loud, and the people that was in the camp feared. And when Moses had brought them forth to meet God from the place of the camp, they stood at the bottom of the mount. And all Mount Sinai was on a smoke: because the Lord was come down upon it in fire, and the smoke arose from it as out of a furnace and all the mount was terrible. And the sound of the trumpet grew by degrees louder and louder and was drawn out to a greater length. Moses spoke and God answered him. And the Lord said to him: Go get thee down: and thou shalt come up thou and Aaron with thee: But let not the priests and the people pass the limits, not come up to the Lord lest He kill them.

. . . And all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet and the mount smoking: and being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses: speak thou to us and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us lest we die" (Exodus xix).

What a contrast between this awful picture so vivid in their minds and the memory of the scene they had just left. The quietness of the green clad mountainside rising up from the peaceful lake, the attentive multitude clustered about the central figure on the plateau, gazing eagerly on His beautiful face as they listened to the sweetest voice in all the world setting forth His gospel of love. No wonder they found it difficult to orientate themselves. No wonder all the Three Years were a puzzle and bewilderment, and not until the Holy Ghost had come upon them were they able to put the pieces together and see and know.

Catering to the worldly-minded Jews, Moses and their teachers had always held before them material images of earthly reward for righteousness, and they had been taught that the glory or shame of Israel depended on their faithfulness to Jehovah. In consequence, they reasoned that wealth, health, worldly position and success were signs of God's favor, and poverty, suffering and failure were His punishments. "Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?" (John ix. 2), they asked concerning the blind man healed. They resented the humiliation of their nation by the Romans and looked for the Messias not only by a conquering army to reinstate them in their pristine greatness, but also to punish unmercifully all their enemies. Wrong as was this distortion of the Law and Prophets yet so strongly was it ingrained in the Jews that Our Divine Lord's teachings of love, patience and forgiveness, although backed by His miracles and the example of His own life, were far from acceptable and were made a political pretext against Him by the Scribes and Pharisees. Almost in vain were His efforts to counteract the prejudices of this "stiff-necked generation"

by plainest illustration as in the story of Dives and Lazarus, or by His gentle treatment of the afflicted and fallen. They sneered; they cried out "this man consorts with publicans and sinners." "They took up stones to cast at Him." In divine toleration of their limitations Our Lord lived out His life and went "about his Father's business," and to all their dull-witted criticism Calvary was the answer supreme. For not only to these "hard of heart and slow to believe" was His mission but to the "many (who) shall come from the East and West and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew viii. 11).

The clear flame of the Pentecostal fire that brought discernment of Him, the Son of God, to the Apostles and disciples has persisted in all the ages, so that to-day, as always, there are those who love and know. While the mad pagan world strives for ease, honors, and wealth, and in an insane dread of poverty and suffering tramples and crushes, and in haughty pride wreaks its vengeance on all who would thwart its ambitions, the clear-eyed vision of His faithful ones sees true values and relations, as they cluster about Him seated again on the mountainside. In the Blessed Sacrament He is as truly present as He was that spring morning, and His message from the Host is the same to meek and merciful and poor in spirit. Clean of heart, they see Him, their God.

CHAPTER VII

THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

OUR Catholic faith is a gift of God all undeserved and unmerited. It is a quality added over and above to all we have received. It is an accomplishment that completes and perfects our nature and through it we became possessed of the fullness of revelation. As the musician, the painter, or the sculptor is a man marked amongst his fellows because his gift of artistry differentiates him, so the man of faith walks amongst those less favored. He is the proud possessor of a golden key that unlocks for him pleasures and treasures unknown to the common herd. The man of faith is like a musician whose soul thrills to the harmony of a symphony that to a common mind ungifted is but a jumble of sound, or at best a melodious mystery, but to him a sweet story in wood, reed, and brass made exquisitely articulate by the magic of the conductor's baton. Our faith thus perceives and appreciates the celestial symphony of the Sacred Scriptures which Holy Church interprets and makes clear—a harmonious whole. In the allegro and andante movements of Genesis and the Histories; in the scherzo of the Canticles and the dolce of the Psalms; in the piano of the minor prophets and the fortissimo of Isaias and Ezechiel, Jeremias and his secretary Baruch, the son of Nerias. In the diminuendo of Bethlehem and Nazareth, through the ascending arpeggio of the Three Years to the crescendo of the finale of Calvary, the Church's baton of Infallibility accents the *leit-motif* of God's love for man and makes clear the theme and its variations.

All that the Old Law foretold in prophecy and figure was fulfilled by Our Divine Lord in His life on earth, and His life on earth He relives again in His Church. "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (Matthew xxviii. 20), He said, and in doctrine and liturgy, figure and substance are made vital. The rites and ceremonies of the Mass and Sacraments, the imposing ritual of ecclesiastical functions, the traditional observances of the religious orders, and the disciplinary precepts for the faithful make live again the prophecy and facts of revelation, as the various instruments of wood, reed, and brass in the regulated precision of a symphony's measure make live in polyphonic harmony the heads, stems, and pennants of the composer's inspiration. When, therefore, the Church exhorts her faithful children to put in practice the corporal works of mercy she is but pointing them in the way of externating specifically in their lives the great commandment to love our neighbor that Our Lord declared linked with that of the love of God fulfills all the Law and the Prophets. To feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked and shelter the homeless, to visit the sick and captive, and bury the dead is emulating in our lives the works of Our Lord on earth that were prefigured and foretold in the Old Law.

The life of Adam and Eve nourished in the Garden of Delight by the bountiful gifts of God, dowered with beauteous bodies, visited by Himself when "He walked with them in the afternoon," sheltered under the luxuriance of tropical foliage, was but a figure of the tender care man received after the Fall and that Our Lord also showed him when He came "not to destroy but to perfect the Law." When the ingrates of Eden stood shamefaced before Him whose anger they had merited by their lack of trust, God's mercy prevailed at the sight of their helplessness and He did not retract His bounty. Although "the Lord God sent him out of the Paradise of pleasure to till the earth from which he was taken" (Genesis iii. 23), yet that tilling

would reward him with food and drink albeit by "labor and toil." Moreover "The Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them" (Genesis iii. 21).

In the after years when "the earth was corrupted before God and was filled with iniquity by the mighty men of old, men of renown . . . it repented Him that He had made man on the earth" (Genesis vi. 4, 6, 11), and "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the flood gates of heaven were opened and the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights and the waters of the flood overflowed the earth, . . . but Noe found grace before the Lord" (Genesis vii. 11, 12), Who gave him shelter in the Ark with his family. Almost innumerable are the other instances of the corporal works of mercy performed either by God Himself or by His Patriarchs and Prophets recorded in the Old Testament. The feeding of the Israelites with quail and manna: "And Moses said, in the evening the Lord will give you flesh to eat and in the morning bread to the full" (Exodus xvi. 8). The miraculous water that flowed from the rock Horeb at touch of Moses' rod and from the jawbone of the ass to quench the thirst of Samson. The bread and flesh brought by the ravens night and morning to Elias, and the hearth cake and water given him by the angel, and he "walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God" (3 Kings xix. 8). The multiplication of the meal and pottage by Eliseus at Galgal, and of the barley loaves of the man from Baalsalisa. The healing of the sick by sight of the brazen serpent in the desert, and the cure of Naaman the Syrian leper by Eliseus. The captives Sidrach, Misach and Abdenago visited in their fiery prison by the angel. "But the angel of the Lord went down with Azarias and his companions into the fiery furnace and he drove the flame of fire out of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew" (Daniel iii. 49, 50). The practical charity of Tobias to his fellow captives

in Ninive—"Tobias went daily among all his kindred and comforted them and distributed to every one as he was able out of his goods. He fed the hungry and gave clothes to the naked and was careful to bury the dead and they that were slain" (Tobias i. 19, 20). These, like the tinged clouds that herald the sun's rise in the flattery of his colors, foretold the life fulfillment of brotherly love to Him who "went about doing good." He clothed human nature in His divinity. He came to the world captive in its prison of sin and broke the cruel bonds. He took the sick world by the hand and lo, it leaped in health through His touch. He began His public Life by giving drink to the thirsty of Cana of Galilee, and St. John records His last appearance to His disciples before the Ascension, thus: "As soon as they came to land they saw hot coals lying and a fish laid thereon and bread. And Jesus said unto them: 'Come and dine.'" (John xxi. 9, 12.) The Three Years were a succession of corporal works of mercy. "Jesus went about all the cities and towns teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity" (Matthew ix. 35). Nor was it only in the healing of the cripples and palsied, dumb and blind, that He showed His mercy, but also in the feeding of the multitudes by the miracles of the loaves and fishes "lest they faint on the way" from the desert places whither their enthusiasm had led them following Him—symbol indeed of His thoughtful kindness in the Unending Miracle, His work of mercy to the hungry and thirsty souls of all mankind in "the desert places" of all times. *"Panem de cœlo prestitisti eis, omne delectamentum in se habentem."* Weary and heartsore, faint and discouraged, the centuries have seen the multitudes gather about Him and to them all He has given the White Food. "Take ye and eat. Drink ye all of this (Matthew xxvi. 26, 27), "for my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed" (John vi. 56).

Small wonder that the world has looked with amazement

on His followers strong in that food walking to the mount of the Lord, fulfilling the "new commandment" given to His "little children" immediately after the institution, and thus proving that they are His disciples by having love one for another in practicing the corporal works of mercy in His Church.

As soon as the Church began to function as the visible Body of Christ on earth there began the works of mercy, kindness, and compassion that have characterized her in all ages and places. From the healing of the lame beggar sitting "at the gate of the temple which is called beautiful" (Acts iii. 2), by the first Pope, history's pages show how well Christ's Vicar has done Christ's works of mercy to needy humanity. And that example has been followed even by the humblest from the days when St. Luke records, "Their possessions and goods they sold and divided them to all according as everyone had need" (Acts ii. 45), down to the latest donation to home and foreign missions, and the most recent contribution to parochial societies given generously by the faithful members of the Church that does Our Lord's works of mercy.

"Deep calleth to deep," and from century to century the tradition has been handed down and each age has practiced the method best adapted to its time and circumstance. "The seven men of good reputation . . . Stephen and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicholas" (Acts vi. 5), appointed by the Apostles for the daily ministrations to the widows of the early Church, and Deborah, Lydia, Phebe, Prisca, and Aquila and the other holy women whom St. Paul has glorified in his Epistles were the prototypes of St. Lawrence and his brother deacons, of St. Francis of Rome, St. Camillus de Lelis, and St. Vincent de Paul, and the host of noble men and women who not only gave their own lives to the relief of the sick, the poor and captive, but by their example drew about them vast armies of devout men and women who accepted the counsel rejected by the

rich young man of the Gospel and in orders and societies vowed to Lady Poverty became the clearing houses for the charitable whose hearts yearned to do the Savior's works of mercy even if by proxy. By their bounty every monastery and convent was dispensary, hospital, and inn for all who bore the sacred credential of need. Neither the cataclysm of the sixteenth century nor the jealousy of civil rulers could stop or undo the work of Christ's followers. From the pages of Cobbett, Montalambert, Cardinal Gasquet, Bernard Ward, and Father Campbell we know how the new conditions were overcome by societies and organizations formed in the Church to meet and satisfy the new needs, that the chain of brotherly love in works of mercy might not be broken. And in our own day the virile Church gives to the world the age-old object lesson that she learned from her Divine Founder.

The little Belgian nuns whom Robert Louis Stevenson saw, so discerningly, weeping softly yet bravely going on to their mission of death as their boat drew near to Molokai, were types, as was Damien himself, of the hosts of missionaries who are equipped to care for the bodies as well as the souls of those to whom they take the Gospel. On every island in the South Seas dwells a man, a stranger consecrate, who has given up country and friends for the sake of the Christ Whose life he lives as priest and physician, and whoever he is and whatever his lineage, he is brother to that multitude of various tongues who too have left home and kindred and in white, gray, brown or black spend themselves and are spent in the mission fields of Asia and Africa. And these are brothers under their skins to the exponents of the Briarean mercy of Holy Church in our own country, whether they are the priests and sisters laboring among the Indians, Negroes, or Eskimos: or they who suffer the hardships of the mission parishes in the West and South; or the sweet-faced, soft-footed sisters of our hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, the afflicted, and fallen; or the brave brothers and

sisters who go down daily to the martyrdom of the classroom, who die that our children may live; or the noble followers of Ozanam who visit the poor in their homes, bury the dead and bring solace and repentance to the prisoners in their cells; or the members of any of the hundred and one diocesan and parochial societies who bring the corporal works of mercy to the sin-sick world even as He whose followers they are.

The philanthropist who salves a bruised conscience by munificent benefactions knows little or nothing of the inspiration that supports and strengthens those who see in the pagan, the poor, the afflicted, and the unfortunate whom they succor, Him Whom they serve, who look beyond the few years of that service and its hardships to the golden gate of Death where He stands waiting. They know He will welcome them with outstretched arms, and before all His angels and saints He will call them to Himself, saying: "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me. . . . Amen I say to you as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew xxv. 35, 36, 40).

CHAPTER VIII

NOVEMBER THE MONTH OF THE DEAD

WHEN the torrid days of summer have become a memory, and the slanted rays of the sun fail to temper the harshness of the winds, when "Autumn writes her rubric on the leaves and the wind turns them over and chants like a friar," and the year lies moaning on its deathbed, Mother Church, with the supernal wisdom that marks her divine origin, bids us turn our thoughts to the dead, and to death, "the one inexorable thing," that will one day fold us in its embrace.

November the month of the Dead! The fields shine saffron in the stubble of the harvest past, and "the maple's misty red, the willow's gold," like abandoned banners proclaim that King Death has passed. The month of falling leaves, when the trees sleep after the heats of the summer and the burden of bearing, and the sap slips back to the trunk, and the little throbbing hearts are stilled that since springtime have so faithfully pumped nourishments from "the earth's sweet yielding breast" to the branches, and the leaves fall back trembling to their mother earth's bosom. So God draws us back to Himself after "life's fitful fever," and gives us rest after "the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to," and our bodies, like the leaves, cuddle into the bosom of the earth from whence they came.

Between the North and South Americas lies a tongue of land that made itself a barrier separating the two great oceans until man's skill gashed its green bosom, and to-day the vessels of the world have roadway from the Atlantic

to the Pacific. From Colon by straight and narrow ways they go where the banks are rich with the wild luxuriance of tropical foliage and many colored birds sing sweet and weird songs; across Gatun Lake, where unnumbered thousands of varieties of orchids in pink and gray, scarlet and purple, cling to the rotting tree trunks that project above the water; past the rushing of the Chagres River that loses itself in the lake; through the forbidding cliffs of Culebra Cut, where, under the shadows of Gold Hill, constant slides make perilous the passage; raised and lowered to the varying levels in the great concrete locks that hold the vessels fast and safe in the transitions that lead where the smooth waters of the Pacific wait invitingly for them to glide to rest, the voyage ended.

Out of the ocean of nothingness our vessel of life floats into the canal of time; over the placid lake of innocent childhood, whose sweet flowers make lifetime memory; through the narrow and dangerous cut where overhanging perils threaten; held safely in the locks of God's Church in the transitions of life's varying levels; and at last piloted to the broad ocean of Eternity into which we glide to rest.

Life is a bandit chief who holds us captive and to him we must pay blackmail, and the longer our captivity the heavier the toll. He takes our youth, our dreams, our ambitions, our friends, our dearest ones. At last we must give up the very strength of our body and mind to this ravenous bandit, Life, who is never satisfied as long as he holds us in his power. He is, indeed, a "strong man armed who keepeth his court." But there is "a stronger than he to come upon him and overcome him and take away all his armor wherein he trusteth, and distribute his spoils." Death, the Deliverer, snatches us from our prison and away from our tyrant, and behind the purple portals of his palace, lo! we find all our treasures again.

In the days of the aborigines, the hapless captive was set to run the gantlet between ranks of savage enemies, who struck him as he passed, in the fury of their hate,

until he fell bleeding and torn. So we run the gauntlet of the years, and each hacks and maims and cuts as we pass, until the weary way is ended and, wounded sorely, we fall into the outstretched arms of the Angel of Death, who bears us gently to Our Lord and Savior: *Cui soli competit medicinam prestare post mortem.*

The Month of Death! It is the poverty of human speech that compels us to call by the name of Death the wondrous alchemy of God's love that changes the dross of our life into the gold of Eternity. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST JOYFUL MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Annunciation

OUR Blessed Lady had spent her childhood in the service of the temple, where with other girls of her age, she learned the Holy Scriptures, worked at making the vestments used in the divine service and took her share in the many other duties of her position. Placed by God, through her Immaculate Conception, as one apart from all the rest of humanity, her unclouded mind quickly absorbed and assimilated the wealth of prophecy and tradition, and God's graces found a fitting repository in her pure soul. Her absolute correspondence with these graces increased her sanctity day by day, until she reached heights never dreamed of in those dark days, and from that lofty eminence of holiness she saw as none had seen before. In this intimate union with God there came the inspiration, and in instant acceptance she vowed her virginity to her Creator. A wondrous and unheard-of act of heroism this, when maternity was the goal of every woman in Jewry, and each prayed and hoped that of her would come the Messias who was to save her people. Mary's parents, however, had no male offspring and on Mary and her sister depended the legal transmission of the family property through marriage with men of their own lineage. Here was perplexity for her who had vowed herself to chastity, yet she trusted in God and, following the custom of her people, was betrothed to her kinsman Joseph. Returning to her father's house she lived a life of activity and prayer dur-

ing the days of espousal, while Joseph in his own home pursued his ordinary occupations. It is an ancient tradition that Mary's high state of holiness did not prevent her from earning her own living in those days when her soul was troubled with many thoughts. Her trust in God was unbounded, and that humble house of Nazareth was a sanctuary of devotion where the Blessed Virgin spent long hours in prayer, in the living room hallowed out of the soft rock against which her father's house was built. In such a moment came to her the radiant vision of God's Angel Gabriel. Filled with wonder at the beauty of the angel, her soul was troubled by his words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women." It was indeed a strange greeting from this resplendent being and, "she thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be." The further words of the angel were even more disconcerting while he sought to quiet her alarm. "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David, his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Here was the fulfillment of what every Jewish woman dreamed of, but what would have rejoiced any of them, troubled Mary. All that dream she had rejected long ago when she vowed herself to chastity. It was all very wonderful, but it could not be for her. Her response to the impassioned words of Gabriel was the calm question, "How shall this be done because I know not man?" The divine messenger then made the momentous annunciation: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In that revelation came the solution of all her doubts and the answer to her difficulties. She would be a mother and

yet a virgin. The dream of Israel's motherhood would be fulfilled in her and her vow of chastity remain sacred.

It was all clear now, and from the rock room of Nazareth went to God's throne the whisper of assent that changed all the world. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke i. 28-38). "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John i. 14).

Because we cannot fathom the great love God bears us we cannot understand the great mystery of the Incarnation. One of the joys of eternity with God will be the understanding of His love for poor fallen man, and we shall need all eternity to comprehend the fullness of meaning of the word "so" in the sentence "God so loved the world as to give His Only Begotten Son" (John iii. 16).

Filled with grateful appreciation of this wonderful love as shown us in the Incarnation of Our Lord, let us consider the practical application of this mystery to our own lives.

Before everything else, comes to our minds the thought of Our Blessed Lady's humility and obedience. She must have known how different she was from all the rest of the world, how superior in every way, when she was inspired to make her vow of chastity. Yet in all humility she lived with her parents, fulfilling the duties of her state in life, and submissive to their will obediently accepted the espousal with St. Joseph.

Herein lies a great lesson in these days when all the world is discussing the rights of women, and many forgetful of the duties of their position claim license for freedom from decency of conduct and modesty of dress under the false plea of emancipation. Many confound intellectual development with rebellion against the traditions of their sex. For all these the Blessed Virgin is the most brilliant model woman, not only in respect to the highest intellectuality but in the most perfect modesty and humility. The natural or acquired traits that cause a woman to be branded

as masculine are those that no true man would own or possess, just as the traits that mark a man as effeminate are faults that no true woman would wish to have. The true woman is valiant indeed, just as the true man is gentle indeed, but in neither does valor or gentleness submerge the essential feminine or the essential masculine. The Blessed Virgin was brave to heroism, as Our Lord was gentle to tears, and both stand unrivaled as the most perfect of the sexes.

When the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity came and dwelt in the body of the Blessed Virgin she had long prepared herself for the great favor. She lived in an atmosphere of devotion and piety, and at the psychological moment God's angel came and when she had consented, God was in her body. We kneel before the altar and the priest, God's messenger, holds our God in his hand before us: "Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world." He cries out the great Annunciation, even as Gabriel did. We bow low as she did, and murmur: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word and my soul shall be healed." The word is said: "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ guard your soul into eternal Life," and our God is with us. In that solemn moment we are as the Blessed Virgin was—God is living in us, but what a world of difference between the two resting places He has chosen. She was Immaculate—what, alas, are we? What preparation have we made? A lifetime, we know, would be too little to prepare properly to receive our God. How easily our Communions become a matter of habit and how much we lose by this we shall not know until our judgment. In worldly affairs we are much more exact. We prepare ourselves for an important interview very carefully: we rehearse our questions and answers, and even with that there is usually a disappointment afterward over what we might have said, but it is too late, our chance has gone. The French have a saying to describe

this: *"L'esprit d'escalier,"* what we wish we had said, as we climb the stairs afterwards. In the few minutes Our Lord remains with us we can do much if we have prepared ourselves properly for the Holy Communion, and if we do forget or overlook, we can make up at our next Communion, for so good is our God that we can receive Him every day if we wish.

Let us think of the sweet converse between the Blessed Virgin and her God in those blissful days when He dwelt in her body, and let us try to emulate her in our Holy Communions. Each Communion should be a preparation for the next time He will come to us, and thus our life is marked by His visits until the day when He will come to be our Companion on the Great Journey and will take us with Himself to the Holy Communion of eternity.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND JOYFUL MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Visitation

IN the days that followed the Annunciation, the Blessed Virgin was conscious at all times of the wondrous miracle her life had become since God Himself had come to dwell in her body, yet she was not lost in meditation. There were duties to be performed in the routine of her daily life, and she gave herself to these in faithfulness. Womanlike, her thoughts went constantly back to the scene with the angel, and again and again his words repeated themselves in her mind.

She was in a great quandary. She was but sixteen years old, and her nature craved a sympathetic listener to whom she could unburden her heart brimming over with the new gladness. She knew well that no ordinary woman would understand, not even her parents could know the wonder of the mystery, and her modesty shrank from discussing it with St. Joseph. To all these, her nearest and dearest, her lips were sealed. But the angel had told her of another to whom God had done a wonderful thing, her cousin, St. Elizabeth, who, advanced in years and childless hitherto, was now also to become a mother. To this other favored one the Blessed Virgin determined to go, to assist her in her need and to speak with her of the great thing that had come to her.

"And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the mountainous country with haste, into a city of Juda." These words of the Gospel give but scant idea of the hard-

ship of that five days' journey for the childmother through strange cities and over rough ways. God's angels were a guard of honor to her who bore their King among the unknowing people, and her modest demeanor and preoccupation with her lofty thoughts made her immune to all danger, yet she rejoiced when she had happily reached her destination, "and she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke i. 40-43).

Great were the joy and wonder of the Blessed Virgin when she was thus greeted by her kinswoman in words that caught up and continued the salutation of the Angel Gabriel.

She knew that God had enlightened Elizabeth and so spared her modesty the embarrassment of speaking of her high estate. A kindred soul, as well as kinswoman, was Elizabeth, and now the Blessed Virgin could give vent to the emotions that filled her soul, and put in words her great gratitude to God. Before the adoring Elizabeth and surrounded by her attendant angels, she stood beautiful beyond words with the light of God's love shining from her face. A second Eve, majestic on her lofty eminence of holiness, she looked back across the ages, the weary ages of waiting, and saw the vision of Eden. She saw the guilty pair, shamed and downcast, arraigned before the Lord God whose command they had broken so ungratefully. She saw the serpent groveling in the dust, a malignant gleam of triumph in his little eyes, as the woman whimpered her confession of guilt, "The serpent deceived me and I did eat." She heard the mighty tones of Jehovah, His pity for the broken man and woman tempering their punishment with a hopeful promise: "I will put enmities

between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed, she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel'' (Genesis iii. 15). She saw that other Eve go forth with her mate into the darkness of their penitential toil and pain, and she saw the gloom of the ages bent under the primeval curse brightened by flashes of God's unchanging love, and heartened yet again by the renewal of His promise in the prophets' words of hope. . . . And then she saw the glory once more of Gabriel as he brought to her the message from on High that would set mankind free, and in her breast now was He, the Promised One, Emmanuel, God with us, for ''The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us'' (John i. 14). Lifted beyond all earthly things, in an ecstasy of exultation, her soul found expression in the inspired words of her great canticle. No human words could adequately express her emotions, and so, from the inspired words of the Old Testament, so familiar to her from reading and meditation, she wove a pæan of praise, prophecy, and thanksgiving, and in true oriental manner sang her vision in simple and sublime harmony.

''My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is from generation unto generations to them that fear him. He hath shewed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy: As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever'' (Luke i. 46, 55).

Our Blessed Lady was no dreamer or idealist, and there were many things at hand to recall her to the practical

purpose for which she had made the journey to Elizabeth. Having thus poured forth her tribute to the Almighty, she turned herself to the fulfilling of the precept of neighbor love, and for three months remained with her aged cousin, helping her and cheering her in her need, and returned to Nazareth only after the birth of Elizabeth's child, John the Baptist.

There are many practical lessons to be learned from this mystery of the Visitation. When the Blessed Virgin bore Our Lord in her body, she was as we are when He comes to us in Holy Communion. Our faith makes us know that He is really and truly in our bodies, and we need be at no loss to know how to entertain Him, for we have as model His own mother. Therefore, our first thought is, as was hers, one of heartfelt thanksgiving for the wonderful favor He bestows on us who are so unworthy. From the depths of this knowledge of our unworthiness, we adore God who has regarded our lowliness in His love and has done great things to us. Confident of this love for us, we ask Him for the many favors we stand in need of, spiritual and temporal. In return for His generosity to us, we gladly offer Him ourselves—body and soul—and strengthened by our Communion with Him we resolve to show in our lives how generous we can be to Him and to our neighbor. We recall, in grief, our many offenses, and while rejoicing that these have been blotted out in His loving forgiveness, we look ahead, fearful lest we should offend again, and plan our conduct in regard to the persons, places, and things that would lead us away from Him. Thus forewarned, when the sweet Communion is ended, we go forth to take up our daily tasks, and strong in His strength to do our work of love for Him.

It would be but a profitless Holy Communion with Our Lord if there were no after-effects. There must be an externation of the strength, peace, and love for our fellow man that we win from Him who is united with us for the moments of Holy Communion. As the Blessed Virgin did

not sit idly contemplating the great things God had done to her, but gave herself to the service of her kinswoman, so must we be active in the good works that are calling us. If any one could have justly filled her days with prayer only, it was she who was the Mother of God, yet she did not. Our Lord said: "And the second [commandment] is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew xxii. 39). Love must always express itself in acts. The Blessed Virgin's great love for God made her love for her neighbor a vital thing in her life, and so must it be with us. There are sick to be comforted, the weak to be helped, the wayward to be recalled, the good to be encouraged. There are rough ways of our neighbor to be made smooth and crooked ways to be made straight.

The man who has been favored by royalty delights in recounting his familiarity with these great ones. He apes their accents, imitates the dress and mannerisms of his heroes, and lets all the world know of his intimacies with them. How much more shall we who are favored with most intimate relations by God make all the world know this by our conduct and words? Throughout our country, the houses where George Washington slept or ate are shrines of veneration, and all look on these favored places as made sacred by their association with the Father of our Country. Our bodies are the frequent resting places of the God of Heaven and Earth—they are the shrines made sacred by His association. Our national holidays commemorate the great events in our nation's life. What an eventful day is that when Our Divine Lord visits us, and very jealously should we keep it. Our souls are swept and garnished for the coming of the King, and when He has entered in we make obeisance, we offer our gifts and take largess from His generous hands. When He has departed, the perfume of His presence lingers with us, and as we go among our fellow men we are marked apart from all less favored. The visit of the King is apparent to all, for we are more kind, more gentle, more forgiving, more generous.

It is a maxim of the world that propinquity makes love. When we are daily, or weekly privileged to entertain Our Lord in Holy Communion, there must, of necessity, be increase of love for Him and our neighbor, and service is the measure of love, and loving service of God and our neighbor is our destiny in this world, where we wait from Communion to Communion until the shadows gather about our way, and He comes to us for the last time veiled, and goes with us, our fellow Traveler, through the gates of our eternal Holy Communion with Him and His mother and the angels and saints.

CHAPTER XI

THE THIRD JOYFUL MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Birth of Our Lord

WHEN Cæsar Augustus found himself at last master of the Roman Empire he decided in the pride of his heart to have enrolled all the people who dwelt under the Roman Eagles. In his halls of record posterity should read the long roll of names, the vast stores of munitions, and the endless lists of properties and should know that Augustus Cæsar was Emperor of all these. He little knew that he was the instrument of Divine Providence to bring about the fulfilling of Jewish prophecy, and that when the story of his greatness would be but a schoolboy's task, men of all ages and places would know of his decree only because an incident of his prideful act was the most momentous event in the world's history, and the inspired record of that occurrence would be the amber in which his name would be enshrined.

Though Judea was but an allied province, the imperial decree was proclaimed there, but as a concession to Jewish prejudice the Roman method was not used, and in its stead the census was ordered to be taken according to the Jewish customs by clans and families. As St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin both belonged to the House of David the imperial decree sent forth by Cyrinus obliged them to travel to Bethlehem, for David had sprung from the sturdy shepherds who tended their flocks on the hillsides surrounding that town.

So tenderly and carefully did St. Joseph watch over his

precious charge in seeking to lessen the fatigue and hardship of the journey for her that the Divine Company was easily distanced by the crowds on the road, and when they arrived at Bethlehem it was to find the small town congested by an unusual multitude gathered from all parts of the country to be enrolled. St. Joseph went, as all travelers did, to the khan of the city seeking shelter and lodgings. Every town and city in that country was provided with such a public enclosure. Roofed galleries ran about the sides and on a raised platform the travelers made their lodgings with their own furniture, while the open space was used for building the fires that cooked their food, which also they carried with them. When St. Joseph reached this enclosure he found every available space already taken. The place resounded with shrill cries of greetings and protests as the travelers busied themselves in visiting and in preparing for the night, while busy groups about the fires were engaged in the preparation of the evening meal. The humble couple with their modest baggage was scarcely noticed except to be jostled and pushed about in the confusion as St. Joseph sought vainly for accommodations. There was no room for them in the inn. The soft chalkstone sides of the neighboring hills, however, were dug out in small caves that were ordinarily used for the shelter of tourists' beasts, but now were in demand as dwelling places and to one of these St. Joseph turned his steps, perhaps guided by some kind-hearted Bethlehemite who saw the need there was for shelter for this childwife. Here was born the Kings of Kings, our Savior and Lord. Millions of devout pilgrims have traveled that way in the centuries since that night and have knelt in tearful joy in the small grotto and kissed the golden star let into the stone floor, under the glowing lamps, that marks the spot where Our Lady first held in her arms God, her Son.

All unknowing of the miracle, the noisy crowds surged through Bethlehem's streets and there was much merry-

making in the khan. God's angels swirled and circled in joyful greetings to the newborn Babe. Fain would they have told their glad tidings to the people of the town, but these were too busy with their affairs to heed the heavenly visitors. But there were shepherds keeping the night watch over their flocks on the neighboring hillside. The warm spell of weather, such as we have at Christmas sometimes, had tempted them to take their sheep out and thus make room for the cattle of the visitors in the crowded stables and sheds. These simple-minded men out under the stars were the favored ones. To them came the angels with the glad tidings of great joy and their startled eyes saw the beauteous things and heard the wondrous words: "This day is born to you a Savior who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger" (Luke ii. 11, 12).

Dazzled with the splendor of the vision, the shepherds were speechless and listened amazed to the multitude of the heavenly host who could not contain themselves with joy, but filled the heavens with their brightness and the sweetness of the song of gladness, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke ii. 14). Then they were gone and the darkness was darker than ever for their absence. The shepherds were lonely now and restless. The echo of the angels' song still sang in their hearts and they could never be the same again. Men who have seen angels do not easily adjust themselves to lesser things. The world was drab and gray to them, and the still night and stupid sleeping sheep unsatisfactory. They looked at one another in silence and then: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass which the Lord hath shewed to us. And they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger. And seeing they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child" (Luke ii. 15-17). It was all clear to them now. The vision of the angels was not a dream, for here was

the loveliest child and the most beautiful mother, and the little cave was quivering with the touch of angels' wings. On their knees they adored and believed and went out to their daily life transfigured with their nearness to divinity and their whole life sweetened with the memory of the mother's smile. Nor could they be silent concerning this mighty event in their lives. Eagerly they went to their kinsfolk and the strangers in the khan and town and told the wondrous story. "And all that heard wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds" (Luke ii. 18).

Those who heard the tale of the shepherds must have gone to see for themselves, and for many days the Holy Family was the object of interest until other engrossing details of the census-taking took the popular fancy. Many of those who thus saw Our Lord and His mother saw only the comely Child and the beautiful young mother, gazed curiously and went their way, but many must have seen more and kept the memory in their hearts, and when Our Lord appeared to preach must have remembered.

While we thus recall the Gospel narrative of Our Lord's birth in the stable of Bethlehem and marvel as the shepherds did at God's goodness to man, our thoughts turn naturally to the Bethlehem of our altars and we marvel at God's continued goodness to man in the daily Mass. Our faith makes us know that as really and as truly as in miraculous manner, Almighty God became man and was held in the arms of His mother, so really and truly the same Babe who grew to manhood and died on the cross comes on our altars, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the sacred species. We gather about Him as the shepherds did in answer to the angel's message. The angel of our faith calls us from our sleep, from our affairs. Well is it for us if like the shepherds we come "with haste," not with lagging steps, careless whether we are late or not. Well for us if eagerly and earnestly we kneel in reverence and adore, for then will it be with us as with them when

"seeing they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child."

To be allowed to come to Mass is a wonderful privilege and we should appreciate it. The shepherds were specially favored by the angel's message summoning them to Bethlehem. We are specially favored by the gift of faith that makes us know that Our Lord is really present and offered up at Mass for the sins of the world. Many Catholics come to Mass as did the curious of Bethlehem who visited Our Lord, looked and did not understand: they are not instructed properly and Mass is a weekly task only; they come but they do not understand "The word that was spoken to them concerning this child."

For those who know and understand there is a solemn duty to instruct others, especially their children and those under their charge. "And all those that heard wondered at those things that were told them by the shepherds." What a wonderful story we have to tell of the Mass and how glad we should be to tell it to those less favored than we are. Men travel great distances at much expense and fatigue to be present at the Passion Play of Oberammergau, and the best dramatic art was expended some years ago in staging "Parsifal," yet as a noted English author said, "The most tragic thing in the world to-day is any low Mass said by any priest." Those who turn in disgust from the pitiful shams of the charlatans who seek to lure by a pretense of spirituality the soul-hunger of the world, would accept most eagerly, if they but knew, the mystic grandeur of the Mass. Apart from the fact of transubstantiation, the Holy Mass as a world-wide and century-old ceremony, is the most interesting thing in the world to-day. The priest in the robes of twenty hundred years ago, reading the unchanged words that all priests in all ages and countries have read since the earliest days, moving in rhythmic grace through the postures that emperors and kings and peasants have looked on since the dawn of civilization in all lands, and the whole forming a function that unites the

Pope, the head of the Church, with the humblest missionary, each, whether under the dome of St. Peter's or beneath the palm-leaf hut in darkest Africa, making the same act, surely forms a picture so unique as to win the most jaded mind of the most modern Athenian.

When to all this is added, as our faith makes us know, the Real Presence of Our Lord on our altars, we cannot keep silence. We must be the angels bringing the glad tidings to the shepherds of the world who are keeping their watches and all unknowing of the great mystery so near them.

CHAPTER XII

THE FOURTH JOYFUL MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple

FROM the night that the first-born of Israel had been saved in Egypt when the angels destroyed the first-born in the house whose door-posts were not marked with the blood of the lamb, it was the law that every first-born must be consecrated to God and devoted to His service. The presentation took place at the purification of the mother, for according to the law a mother, after the birth of her child, must spend in prayer and meditation forty days if her offspring were a male, and double that number if a female, before she could approach the Sanctuary. When this double ceremony took place in the temple a holocaust of a lamb was required, and a turtle dove for a sin offering, but for the poor an offering of two pigeons was sufficient: while the child was redeemed from service of the temple by paying five shekels (three dollars and seventy-five cents). It is in remembrance of this law that we have the custom of making an offering at Baptism.

When Our Divine Lord was forty days old, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin took Him to Jerusalem for the ceremony of presentation and purification. These days had been spent quietly in the house of Bethlehem, where the Holy Family had been soon removed in accordance with the hospitality of the East. During the first days many had come to satisfy their curiosity in regard to the wonderful Child, but soon the interest excited by the shepherds' tale was replaced by some other event of the census-taking,

and the Holy Family was left in peace. The Circumcision, when He was eight days old, was performed by St. Joseph, and the simple statement in the Gospel in marked contrast to the excitement related when the same ceremony was performed on John the Baptist would indicate how quickly the wonders surrounding Our Lord's birth were forgotten.

When the Holy Family arrived at the temple St. Joseph purchased in the courtyard two young pigeons, the offering to be made by a poor man, and as the little group took its place with the many others gathered for the same purpose there was nothing to distinguish them from their companions excepting the extraordinary beauty of the girl-mother and the tender gentleness of St. Joseph in his care of them. God had willed, however, that their act of obedience should be made memorable for all those assembled there and the occasion of acts of faith to be recorded in the Gospel. As the aged Simeon passed the place of ceremony on his way to his daily devotions in the temple, he was inspired by God and knew that his constant prayer that he might see the Messias before he died was answered. Approaching the crowd of babies and parents and witnesses that formed a scene such as we know at Baptism in a parish church, he took Our Lord in his arms. To the onlookers he was a kind old gentleman evidently fond of children and they, no doubt, regarded this act of the well-known scribe with knowing smiles, but their levity was soon changed to reverent awe as with eyes turned to heaven he chanted his hymn of praise and thanksgiving! "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke ii. 29-32). While they listened he gave the Child to His mother, and seeing her wonderment he continued: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign

which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce'' (Luke ii. 34, 35).

Nor was Simeon the only witness. Among the temple attendants was the aged widow, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, a member of the tribe of Aser, famous for its riches and splendor. All these she had relinquished and, the Scripture says, devoted herself to the service of the temple, ''by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now she, at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel'' (Luke ii. 37, 38). Her religious life had made her mental vision keen and she saw what others did not. The Babe was to her the Messias, and she must make Him known.

In meditating on this account of the Presentation in the Temple many lessons come to our mind. The first and most obvious of these is, of course, the obedience of Our Divine Lord and His holy mother in fulfilling the law. Our Blessed Lady was absolutely pure after as before the Virgin Birth, and therefore, not to be reckoned as the other mothers of Israel, yet she presented herself for the purificatory prayers of the priests in the temple. Our Divine Lord, the Great High Priest of the New Law, likewise submitted Himself to the observance for example to us. When we may be tempted to count reasons for our exemption from the laws of the Church, it is salutary to recall the obedience of the Holy Family who had every reason for exemption but did not avail themselves of them. It has frequently happened that the strict observance of the regulations of the Church has been not only an edification to those outside the Church, but the occasion of investigation that culminated in the gift of faith, while lax and negligent conduct in these matters has hardened the hearts of seekers and frustrated God's work.

Equally obvious is the second thought, that the great grace given to Simeon and Anna came to them when they were engaged in works of supererogation. Both were not

only devout practicers of the letter of the Law, but the Holy Scriptures testify to their adding also many pious practices. There are many good Catholics who are satisfied with fulfilling all the Church commands. They hear Mass on Sundays and holy days, observe carefully the laws of fasting and abstinence, receive Holy Communion at intervals in the year and so fulfill the letter of the law. They could hear Mass every day and many could receive Our Lord in Holy Communion every day or every week; they could attend the Holy Hour and be members of the parish societies, but they do none of these because they do not feel obliged to, and they are content with doing what they are commanded to do by the Church. Nothing ever happens in their lives.

There were many Jews that day in the temple and its courts who were devout and fervent in fulfilling all the law commanded. None of these saw God in the Babe. Simeon and Anna had given their lives in loving service and works of supererogation. . . . "There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him, and he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ, Our Lord."—"And there was a prophetess, called Anna, who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving God night and day." To these two God manifested Himself. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew v. 8). They who, like Simeon and Anna, are generous with God and give themselves and their time without stinting, who belong to the parish societies and are constant in their attendance at church services, frequent at Holy Communion and present at the Holy Hour, to these God is manifested. They are the clean of heart who see God in all the dispensations of His Providence. Sorrows, trials, and crosses in their lives are God's manifestations, and they see Him in these

as clearly as in the sweetnesses and joys they receive from Him.

It is notable that Simeon and Anna were favored by a special manifestation when they were in the temple out of devotion. Our Divine Lord manifests Himself in a special manner to those who visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament at Benediction, at the Holy Hour, and in those golden moments when we kneel alone and open our hearts to Him there come clear vision to the bewildered soul, strength to the weak, and courage and perseverance to the long-tried.

In human society we look for aid and comfort not to chance acquaintances, or those whom we have neglected and disregarded, but to our friends to whom we have proved our friendship. When we prove our love and friendship for Our Lord by frequent Holy Communion, by visits to Him in the Blessed Sacrament and attendance at the public devotions in His honor in the Blessed Sacrament, then we can expect from Him and be sure of receiving singular favors of help and comfort.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Finding of Our Lord in the Temple

ACCORDING to Jewish law all men were obliged to go to the temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover; while the women were not so obliged they were permitted to accompany the men if they wished.

During the early years of Our Lord's life spent in the lovely town of Nazareth, nestling against the mountain-side, when "the Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom" (Luke ii. 40), St. Joseph made his annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the other men of the town, while the Blessed Virgin kept guard over their Divine Treasure. When, however, Our Lord had attained His twelfth year, He became a "Son of the Law" and was subject to its obligations, amongst which was the annual attendance at Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. Thus He entered into the second phase of His life. Already He had learned to read the Scriptures and the simple lessons prescribed by the law, at the knees of His adoring mother who, fulfilling her duty of instructing Him, never forgot that He was her God, and worshiped His eternal wisdom. Now He had to attend the synagogue and bind the phylacteries about His head, and when the time for the Passover came He accompanied for the first time St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin to Jerusalem.

The company from Galilee formed a large party, and as they traveled leisurely the journey must have taken three or four days. Tradition still marks the towns where

they stayed for each night's resting on the direct route through Samaria. Seven days were spent in the Holy City celebrating the Passover, "and having fulfilled the days, when they returned the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not, and thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. And not finding Him they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions" (Luke ii. 43-46). From these few sentences in the terse eloquence of the Scriptures we can easily build up the whole scene.

In round figures, between two and three millions of people attended the Passover, and when the seven days were over there must have been great confusion in the city as this great multitude streamed out of the various gates and choked the roads leading in all directions, as they hastened to their homes. Each company was formed with the women and old men mounted on beasts of burden, while the men marched along and the children were scattered with either section of the party. Sacred hymns and canticles were chanted as the party proceeded. In this manner the contingent from Nazareth joined with the crowd going to Galilee, and as they had not left the city until towards noontime, there was little hope of families or friends that might have been separated in the departure finding one another until camp was made for the night. The disquiet that St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin felt at the absence of Our Lord from them was allayed by the thought that at evening He would be sure to come to them, and besides, He was quite capable of taking care of Himself. When evening came and each family group gathered together for the night the women busied themselves with preparing the evening meal while the men pitched the tents.

We can imagine the consternation of the Blessed Virgin

and St. Joseph as they waited for Him to come to them. Other small boys were running eagerly to their parents, but their Boy did not come. In a panic of fear they went from group to group "seeking Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances." The search was very thorough, for all knew and loved Him and shared the parents' grief. "And not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking him." Diligently they searched the highroads and byways, filled with dread, for the country was then in troublesome days and insurrectionists prowled the land. Through the next day and night they kept up the search in the city streets, for they could not rest and were heartsick with anxiety. The third day was the Sabbath, and on that day the Doctors of the Law held their weekly meeting in the great stone building of the temple, called the Hall of Gazith. This meeting was always attended by a large audience, who listened eagerly as the Sanhedrin and Scribes discussed difficulties presented to them concerning the interpretation of the law. Popular as were always these meetings, now at the close of the Passover the usual crowd was augmented by the many strangers who availed themselves of the opportunity to be present and see and hear the famous sages of Israel. It was just the occasion that would attract a normal boy, and there they found Him, "seated in the midst of the doctors hearing them and asking them questions, and all that heard Him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers." It was an illustrious assemblage that numbered among the famous teachers the aged Hillel, who was reputed the peer of Moses, and his unflinching opponent Shammai, of whom there was a saying: "*Shammai ligat, Hillel solvit*" (Shammai binds, Hillel loosens). There, too, was Simeon whose old eyes gleamed with joy at seeing again Him whom he had held in his arms a Babe. And among the younger doctors were Joseph of Arimethea and Nicodemus, whose great act would forever link their names with His. A rare treat indeed was given the audience that day, and of all

who were astonished at His wisdom there were many who in the years to come would be more astonished as they gathered about Him and saw His miracles, or sat on the grass and ate the miraculous bread and fish. Some there were who would, alas, forget, and in Pilate's courtyard, taking their cue from even these same learned doctors, would look unmoved on the scourged body of Him who had astonished them, and would join in the hateful cry that has filled with horror the ages through which it still echoes.

Back to Nazareth He went with His mother, and the veil dropped.

When we meditate before that same Lord on this incident in His life where for a moment He revealed Himself, what a wealth of application floods our souls? It is difficult to select even among the most prominent lessons. First, of course, is the obvious thought that He was lost in the bustle and confusion attending the departure of the company from Jerusalem as they hurried, anxious to get back to their business and routine of life, and doubtless impatient that so much time had to be given to religious observances. There are many who lose Our Lord in these days from just such impatience in the bustle and confusion of life. In the stress of life's struggles, the competition of trade, the greed for money, the demands of social duty, the enmities and friendships of the world, the thousand and one details attending the bustle and confusion of what we call life, Our Lord is lost. Men have no time to say their morning prayers, business presses so, and they are too wearied at night. The Sunday Mass is a duty, and the day is too crowded for a second Mass or High Mass or Vespers. The evenings are taken up and it is impossible to get to the Holy Hour; a mission is announced but it comes just at the busy season when one cannot get away, or at the dull season when one must prepare for the busy days, and so they go on their way out of Jerusalem.

The second thought is equally obvious. The caravan

went on and did not know that Jesus was not with them until the night came. It was a merry party and there was much gayety as they reacted from the strictness of the religious duties of the week past. There was much to talk about concerning the happenings and incidents of the seven days in a great city. There were plans to be made against their return home, and many thrifty souls took advantage of the opportunity to close a bargain or make friends for future use, and they did not miss Him, and did not know He was not with them until the night came.

There are very many in the world to-day who lead merry lives, who are blithe and cheerful and seemingly content; yet they have lost Christ, and they do not know it. It is almost a commonplace to every priest. Take the man or woman who has married a non-Catholic, whose weak faith grows weaker in the non-Catholic atmosphere of the home. For the sake of peace religious subjects are taboo, although the Catholic goes to Mass and sometimes to the Sacraments. A deceptive air of contentment lulls his first misgivings, and it is apparently a happy marriage. Children are born, are baptized, and grow up, but the atmosphere is not a Catholic one and their lives are not ruled by Catholic ideals. They are educated in the state schools, and their religion is a thing apart in their lives. The night comes, some crisis in their lives, and the right decision depends upon their Catholic faith; but they have lost Christ and they did not know it. A marriage is made outside the Church, the children of that marriage are reared outside the Church, and Christ is lost. One of the many sorrows of a priest's life is the lack of realization among Catholics of how easily faith is lost, and the little care taken by parents to protect the treasure of Catholic faith to their children. The priest sees the care and vigilance of parents concerning their children's teeth and adenoids. He sees also the parental neglect of spiritual safeguards, the resultant disaster to their faith, and Christ is lost.

One more thought. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph

did not find Our Lord "among their kinsfolk and acquaintances," nor in the roads, nor in the streets of the city, but "in the temple seated in the midst of the doctors." So Christ is found to-day by those who seek Him.

Faith is preserved and faith is found in reading Catholic newspapers, magazines, and books, in hearing sermons, in public prayers of the Church. The weary world that lost Christ in the sixteenth century and sought Him among the vagaries of the offshoots of that rebellion, and to-day is vainly seeking Him in the fooleries of Christian Science or the deviltries of Spiritism, is finding its quest in vain, and so we see men drawing nearer and nearer to the temple where he is actually with us in the Blessed Sacrament. Every rectory in the land has day after day its seekers learning the Truth. Within the past year we saw the emulation of Catholic practices heralded in our papers. Our President asked and our country obeyed when at the burial of the Unknown Warrior, at Arlington, all through our land there was silence and prayer like to the silence and prayer of the Catholic Angelus. When each of the countries buried with royal honors one who represented the dead of that land, who had made the great sacrifice of patriotism in the World War, each sister country sent its best representative to share the sorrow, and all the world was bound in a community of grief as we in the true Church are bound in our remembrance of our dead on All Souls' Day. It is for us to show the light, to lead these faltering steps in the way to the temple where their weary souls may rejoice at the sight of Him "seated in the midst of the doctors" and be "astonished at his wisdom and his answers."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIRST SORROWFUL MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Agony in the Garden

TOWARDS eleven o'clock of that eventful Thursday night, Our Lord left the upper room with His Apostles and wended His way to the secluded garden where He often spent hours in prayer. From the early evening they had been together sharing momentous things. The Paschal Supper that He had desired with such great desire to eat with them was the solemn ending of the Old Law. Its prescribed rites and ceremonies closed the great volume of the record of the cycle of waiting, the history of His chosen people, and the curtain dropped on the spectacle of tragedy and commonplace that had held the stage of the world for four thousand years. A kaleidoscopic drama indeed, wherein God's love glowed and His anger blazed. Wherein His people nourished with miraculous food and drink "grew fat and kicked," until avenging angels brought them to a bloody repentance and proper humility. Wherein kings led their people in revolt against the true God, and He sent other kings to drag them into captivity. Wherein man alternated in service and rebellion. And now it was ended, and the Messias had come whom the prophets had heralded and for whom the patriarchs had prayed.

"God, Who to glean the vineyard of His choosing
Sent them Evangelists till the day was done,

Bore with the churls, their wrath and their refusing,
Gave at last the glory of His Son."

The God of Sinai and the Burning Bush sat at table with His friends. The thunder and lightning, the pillar of cloud and of fire, were folded away, and He into whose presence in the Holy of Holies, only the High Priest might enter, and that but once a year, girded himself with a napkin and washed the feet of His disciples, and one of the twelve was a traitor.

All Christians have loved to let their fancy paint, from the words of St. John, that scene of the Last Supper when, as one sees in the dissolving views of the cinematograph, the perspective of the Old Law melted away and was lost in the picture of the Man-God at table with His Apostles. On the palimpsest of the Old Law the New Law of Love was stamped in the Precious Blood of Our Lord. With the solemn leisureliness prescribed by the law, the paschal meal progressed at the low table in the center of the upper room, which was of great size, measuring fifty by thirty feet. Our Lord and the Apostles reclined on low couches raised slightly above the floor, the left arm of each supported on cushions, and the right hand free to reach the food. The first ceremonial cup of wine was passed about with the prescribed prayer, and Our Lord then went from one to the other and washed their feet, thus departing from the usual washing of hands that He might teach them a lesson of humility. Having resumed His garments and taken His place, each partook after Him of the salad of bitter herbs, cresses and parsley, dipped in the sauce Charoseth made of almonds, apples, figs, and citron, cooked in vinegar, and colored by cinnamon and other spices into a ruddy brick tint, a symbol of the toils of Israel in Egypt. After this antipasta, the supper began, and consisted of unleavened bread wrapped in herbs and moistened with the sauce, and the Paschal Lamb that had been baked, transfixed with two rods of pomegranate in the form of

a cross so as to keep intact its form. Meantime, Our Lord in answer to the rubrical questions of the youngest present, gave the explanation of the various foods and their mystical meaning, and in the pauses of the meal psalms were sung, while three other cups of wine were passed about in accordance with the etiquette of the feast.

Strict as were the regulations that governed the eating of the Pasch, it was by no means a gloomy function. Conversation was carried on as at any social banquet, and in St. John's Gospel we read the glad words which expressed Our Lord's joy that the great moment of His life, so long desired, was drawing near. The Apostles felt the nearness of something momentous, but they did not understand. Our Lord was obliged to rebuke not only the hasty declaration of Peter's loyalty, but also the bickering rivalry that broke out among the others who were dreaming of the importance of their position as His friends in a new dispensation of freedom for Israel.

At length, the meal ended, and Judas was bidden to do his deviltry quickly and he "went out immediately, and it was night" (John xiii. 30). While God's angels stood expectant in the great room: "Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye and eat. This is my body. And taking the chalice he gave thanks and gave to them saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matthew xxvi. 26-28). In these simple words, as simple as the creative "Let there be light," the whole face of the world was changed, and the New Law began. Emmanuel, God is with His people, their daily bread. For this were the thirty years hidden from men, with them and they unknowing. For this the Three Years with their miracles and golden words of promise, all leading up to this moment.

But the Apostles did not understand. A sweet peace filled their souls and great happiness surged through them, for He was really in their hearts in Holy Communion, but

as in a daze they heard Him speaking tenderest words as one hears and enjoys the flowing rhythm of a foreign language without understanding its meaning. The new commandment, the great shibboleth, left them cold. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another" (John xiii. 34, 35). Like loving but stupid children, they listened to Him, interrupting Him with silly questions and comments. And, also, as one makes allowance for mental deficiency in lovable children, Our Lord explained to them in clear words the spiritual mission that would be given to them through the Paraclete, "He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John xiv. 26), but their minds were full of dreams of worldly power, and they did not understand. It seemed hopeless to try longer to lift them to His plane of thought. He must go through with His Passion without their sympathy or understanding, and one day the Holy Ghost would enlighten them, and then they would know. It was growing late, there was much to be done, so looking on their bewildered faces with a sad smile, He said: "Arise, let us go hence" (John xiv. 31).

Leaving the supper room, the little company came out into the bright light of the full moon that was flooding the streets of the city filled with throngs of pilgrims who had come up for the Passover. Not wishing to mingle with these in the solemnity of His thoughts, Our Lord passed through one of the gates near by, in the southern part of the town. Circling the walls of the city, they ascended the valley of Kedron and proceeded to Mount Olivet, on the other side of Jerusalem. As they walked along beside the vineyards that clothed the hillsides, they could see clearly the great piles of branches that had been pruned from the vines, heaped up ready to keep burning the bonfires whose light, added to that of the moon, showed them

the vines themselves clad in the shining greenness of the living branches. Our Lord's thought was all for these, His friends. His duty was clear to Him, but they, ignorant, weak "little children," what a fate awaited them, what trials! Only in Him was their security, and this He must make them see. "I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. If anyone abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you. In this is my Father glorified that you bring forth very much fruit and become my disciples. As my Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love as also I have kept my Father's commandments and do abide in his love." More and more fondly at the near approach to the tragic events waiting Him in the night, Our Lord spoke to the little band walking with Him in the moonlight. "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do the things that I command you. I will not now call you servants. . . . You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go forth and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain; that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you" (John xv. 5-16). The coolness of the night after the heat and excitement of the supper room, the stillness of the scene accentuated by the distant noises of the city, the soothing serenity of the pale moonlight making spectral the spires and domes of the temple beyond, the sweetness of His low-pitched voice that vibrated with emotion as He told them His love, all this moved the Apostles as they had never been before and they cried out: "Behold, now thou speakest

plainly and speakest no proverb. Now we know that thou knowest all things, and thou needest not that any man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them: Do you now believe?" (John xvi. 29-31). Now, but in a few hours and to-morrow, what? Gethsemane was near at hand, and as in a soliloquy Our Lord prayed His prayer—the prayer of the High Priest before the sacrifice, just outside that Holy of Holies of the Garden.

When Our Lord finished His prayer, the little party crossed the bridge over the brook Kedron, and entered the garden called Gethsemane because of the olive press that had formerly stood there at the foot of Mount Olivet. Every one has experienced the gripping of the heart and depression of spirit that comes at the moment an ordeal must be faced. We force ourselves to think it still distant, though we know the minutes are galloping us nearer. Then it arrives and we collapse. So, numbed in grief, we bravely bear our sorrow up to the moment when the falling clods on the coffin crash into our very souls, then we know, and the world is never the same again. Our Lord had gone through the evening with the utmost bravery, and had sought to strengthen and comfort the Apostles on the way, but when He entered the garden, He was face to face with the dread ordeal that waited Him, and an icy chill of terror gripped Him in a depression of spirit that made Him shrink from the moonlight and the company of the disciples. "Sit you here till I go yonder and pray" (Matthew xxvi. 36). The dejection in His words and manner was such a contrast to His usual calmness, that all were alarmed, and Peter, James, and John would not stay, but pressed on with Him into the shadows of the olive trees. Surely the thought of Thabor must have come to them as they watched Him and "He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad." They must have shown their anxiety, for He said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death, stay you here and watch with me. Pray

that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew xxvi. 37, 38, 41).

"Into the Garden my Master went
Clean forspent, forspent,
Into the woods my Master came
Forspent with love and shame."

Seeking sympathy, Our Lord went a stone's throw away into the further gloom of the grotto and prayed until drawn by the yearning for human sympathy. He returned to the three—and found them asleep. What pathos is in the words: "What? Could you not watch one hour with me?" (Matthew xxvi. 40). Once more He faces the dreaded horror, and once again is driven to seek human comfort. Alas! Again He finds them asleep. No wonder, "they knew not what to answer Him." Alone then He must fight it out. Social man can go through all the commonplaces of existence in company of his fellows, but when the current of life brings him to a condition where a decision must be made that will vitally affect his being, it must be faced alone. One's own experience and that of others may be correlated with advice and counsel, but the decision must be made by oneself alone. Herein lies the tremendous responsibility of those in high places whose decisions of equity and justice affect the happiness and welfare of others, and for this must they answer to the God Who has given them power, nor can any but a weakling, who thus confesses his unfitness, plead extenuation. So, we read of the lights burning far into the night in the White House, where a weary man, harassed by the burdens of his office, fights out alone the problems of his high estate. So, in a small room near the roof of the Vatican, when Rome sleeps, Christ's Vicar in the hours when his official day is ended prays and studies and, alone with God, wrestles with the vexing questions which he must decide for the hundreds of millions of the faithful.

Christ, Our Lord, in the garden, fought out alone the

awful struggle. God, whose abhorrence of sin no mind but His can comprehend, must undertake the vicarious suffering that would save His beloved mankind. The thought of it brought scarlet waves that wrapped Him as flames and seared His very soul in the horror of their embrace. No wonder His Precious Blood burst its natural channels and, through the broken capillaries, mingled with the sweat that gathered in drops on His forehead and fell to the ground, against which His face was pressed in the agony of revulsion. With the true bravery that perseveres, though nature rebels, Our Savior prayed: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew xxvi. 42). No answering sign came from His Father. The chalice must be drunk. "Not my will, but thine be done."

Rising, He turned to meet the "band of soldiers and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, with lanterns and torches, and weapons" (John xviii. 3), who had come to take Him to His death. Calm now with the fortitude of determination, He takes the first drink from the chalice. What a draught! The traitorous kiss of His friend who had been His companion for three years, who an hour before sat with Him at table, the world over sign of friendship. "Friend, whereto art thou come?" (Matthew xxvi. 50). Whereto, indeed, had he come! To what lengths had pride and greed brought that man so innocent, so sincere, three years before when he had been called to leave all things and follow Him! What subtlety of sin and self-delusion had warped the soul of Judas, walking with Christ, until his name became a synonym for all meanness and treachery! The mob closed in on Him and laid hands on Him. It was all done so suddenly that the Apostles stood aghast, terrorized by the rabble, led by their own companion, Judas, that desecrated the silence of the garden. The futile defense of the valiant Peter, whose inept swordsmanship added still more to their panic, would have meant capture and serious consequences had

not Our Lord healed the wound of Malchus and pleaded for their safety. "Then the disciples, all leaving Him, fled" (Matthew xxvi. 56).

Out into the moonlight of the still crowded streets went the procession of death. The gaping mob, the leering priests and scribes, the stolid men-at-arms, and Our Lord wrapped regally in the isolation of His splendid immolation. The redemption of man was begun.

CHAPTER XV

THE SECOND AND THIRD SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

The Scourging of Our Lord and His Crowning with Thorns

THE mob that took Our Lord prisoner conducted Him back to the city by almost the same road He had taken with His Apostles to reach Mount Olivet. They wished to attract as little attention as possible, fearing an attempt at rescue, and after skirting the city walls entered the city by the southern gate nearest to the house of Caiphas, the high priest, which was about four hundred feet north of the house of John Mark, where the Last Supper had taken place.

In a wing of this house dwelt Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, and though deposed by the Roman power from the office of High Priest he was regarded by the Jews as their real ruler and most powerful, and it was to secure themselves his influence, by recognizing his power, that the leaders of the mob took Our Lord first to him. We can imagine the malignant glee of Annas when he beheld Our Lord a captive before him. While messengers were hastily sent to summon a quorum of the Sanhedrim, he questioned Our Lord as to His doctrine and disciples, as though a conspiracy had been discovered and the chief conspirator run to earth. The dignified answer of Our Lord orientated the scene: "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple whither all the Jews resort, and in secret I have

spoken nothing. Why asketh thou you? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them; behold they know what things I have said" (John xviii. 20). This was not the language nor the tone of a crestfallen conspirator, and the discomfiture of Annas was so apparent that "one of the servants gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answereth thou the high priest so" (John xviii. 22). With that blow began the succession of horrors that was to end on Calvary. Through the remaining hours of that night and during the next morning, Our Lord was sunk in abyss after abyss of shame and humiliation, as though the blow of the rash official of Annas were a signal for the loosing of hell itself against the majesty of the Man-God. For the three years He had walked the earth, "going about doing good," raising the dead to life, healing the sick, teaching His golden doctrine of love, forgiveness of injuries, doing good in return for evil. In amazement beyond words, the multitude heard Him. They had wanted to make Him king. They had cried out: "Never did man speak as this man." Within the week He had entered Jerusalem in glory, and the people had flung their cloaks on the road before Him and had plucked down palm branches to wave in joy as they cried their Hosannas of gladness at His blessed coming in the name of the Lord. Now, as though He had closed a great door on all that homage and opened another into a hall of shame, Our Lord stands alone in the midst of His enemies and lets them do their will with Him. What terrible lesson did He mean to teach us that needed such awful demonstration? We are bewildered as we ponder over that night and morning of horror and humiliation.

Annas, disappointed over his failure to bait Our Lord, "sent Him bound to Caiphas, the high priest" (John xviii. 24), where all the priests, the scribes, and the ancients were assembled. Then began the travesty of a trial of Him whom they had already condemned in their hearts. What a thrilling scene when Caiphas, in pretended zeal,

after the suborned witnesses had contradicted themselves, cried out: "I adjure you by the living God that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew xxvi. 63). False they all were and full of hate for Him. In the three years they had sought to ensnare Him in His speech; they had derided His teaching; they had looked on jealously at His control of the people as He taught His disconcerting doctrines, so upsetting to their traditions. Now He was in their power. They had secured their long-looked-for opportunity through the weakness of Judas, to cross-question Him in private with neither His disciples nor the populace present. But, as in Gethsemane, when He said, "I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground" (John xviii. 6), so now, in that false court, Caiphas' inspired question brought to their vile sight a Thabor glimpse of His Godhead. "And Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew xxvi. 64). Like men dazzled by lightning, they stood silent in awe of that flash of the Divine. But the malice which had held them for the three years in hate of Him, could not be undone now. Beaten back by the unexpected declaration of Our Lord, they returned to the assault. "Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: 'He hath blasphemed. What further need have we of witnesses?' " It was the cry of a frightened man. Seeking support, he looked about on the others. "Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. What think you?" Gaining courage from the chief priest's palpable bluster, they, answering, said: "He is guilty of death" (Matthew xxvi. 65, 66). They were now wholly in the devil's power. They had put into words the thought they had muttered to themselves and dared not express even to one another, and so committed themselves to the awful sacrilege.

Men nourish a grievance, right or wrong, until their life is embittered. The wish for revenge becomes a mania;

it rides them in sleep and haunts their waking hours, and yet they dare not externate it in act from weakness, cowardice, fear of consequences to themselves, or any of the hundred selfish reasons that are stronger than their mania. Then some one bolder, more reckless than his fellows, makes himself a leader, or some set of circumstances works out an opportunity to wreak their vengeance in safety to themselves, and they go mad. Having committed themselves to the course, even the gentlest become fiends, and most appalling excesses ensue. So one can trace the wild orgies of the French Revolution and the overthrow of the Russian autocracy. This was what happened in that infamous court of Caiphas on that dreadful night. With malignant eyes, they had watched Him in the years before; they had nursed their grievance against Him until it became an obsession. Every sermon, every miracle, added fuel to their hatred, but they feared Him and His power that fed the multitudes, stilled the tempest, and raised the dead to life. Then came the psychological moment—the die was cast, and they went mad. These dignified teachers, the leaders of their people, the cynosure of the pious of Israel, flung themselves from their seats of justice and, with screams and curses, bodily assaulted their helpless Prisoner. "And some began to spit on him and and to cover his face and to buffet him" (Mark xiv. 65). What a scene to delight hell! The successors of Moses and Aaron, of Samuel, and the élite of Israel forming with their servants a rabble of cutthroats. With the expenditure of their rage came their saving cunning for self-preservation, and they turned Our Lord over to the guards, who "blindfolded him and smote his face, and they asked him saying: prophesy who is it that struck thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against him" (Luke xxii. 64, 65).

For more than an hour, this awful sport of these demoniacs continued, while without, in the courtyard, Peter, His chief Apostle, denied Him. With his characteristic

impulsiveness, he had gone, with John, to the house of Annas to be near Our Lord. Sensitive of his uncouth Galilean brogue in the distinguished gathering of city folk, he had tried to shun notice while waiting around the fire in the courtyard to hear something from John, who had gone within. But the sharp-eyed maid, who had admitted both him and John, seeing his nervous awkwardness in the unwonted company, bantered him: "Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean" (Matthew xxvi. 69). With the naïve earnestness of a countryman quizzed by a city lass, Peter denied in confusion. Appreciating this, the girl saw the possibilities of Peter as a butt to while away the tedium of waiting, and told the joke to one of her companions who, with a third, badgered the shamed Apostle until, with the fury of a weak man cornered and forgetting every thing but his own shame and confusion, "He began to curse and swear that he knew not the man. And immediately, the cock crew, and Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which He had said: before the cock crow thou wilt deny me thrice. And, going forth, he wept bitterly." (Matthew xxvi. 74, 75).

The hour that was another bitter draught from Our Lord's chalice of suffering, and the font that furrowed Peter's cheeks with the tears of a lifelong repentance, was spent by the priests and scribes in planning how they could accomplish the death of Our Lord and yet save themselves from danger. They had acted illegally in holding a trial during the night and in passing sentence without the space of a day intervening from the trial. They feared an uprising of the people when it would become known that they had seized Our Lord and made Him prisoner. To get Him as quickly as possible into the custody of the Romans was their only hope to escape the vengeance of His friends, and moreover the Jews had not the power to inflict the death penalty. In the early morning, therefore, the Sanhedrim hurriedly convened again, and once more the travesty of a trial was gone through with; once

more Our Lord gave them a chance to see and believe and repent. But they had determined His death, and so passed the sentence, and the scribes and others proceeded with Him to the Pretorium of Pilate, the Roman Governor, while the priests went to the temple for the early morning sacrifice.

Pilate, like all Roman officials, was a stickler for judicial forms and, besides, he had no desire to be mixed with what he saw was not a question of justice, but of angry hatred, for he knew, from his wife, of Our Lord and His works and of the fanatical opposition to Him on the part of the leaders of the Jews. Finding a pretext, he, therefore, sent Our Lord to Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, but that official ordered Our Lord to be taken back to Pilate. Knowing Our Lord was innocent and that he himself was being made use of by the Jews for their own ends, Pilate tried to save Him. But all his efforts were unavailing, and he sought the line of least resistance, that path of pitfalls and sins, and ordered Our Lord to be scourged. Scourging by the brutal Roman soldiers was a dreadful thing. With leather throngs loaded with knobs of bone and balls of lead, Our Lord's sacred flesh was laid bare in furrows until His body was a mass of wounds, for there was no limit set to the number of blows. His bleeding body was covered by a cloak of one of the legionaries; on His head was placed a crown of thorns and in His bound hands a reed, in derision of His kingship, and he was mocked and spat upon and grievously insulted. Shown thus to the populace, Pilate thought to move their pity. Alas! it was the day of the enemies of the Son of God, and they demanded His crucifixion. Pilate's final attempt to save Him fell before the threat of Tiberius, the cruel Cæsar, and, rejected by His own, Christ the Son of God was led to His death.

What dreadful lesson did Our Lord wish to teach us by the humiliation of the fearful scourging and the thorn-crowning? The crucifixion was a sublime tragedy that moves the world. Death is always sublime. There is a

mysterious solemnity about the spirit-forsaken clay that gives distinction to the lowliest. The humblest peasant who gives his life for his country's cause is acknowledged a hero. The very image of the Man-God nailed to the cross has power to move the sinner to penance, and nerve the saint to uttermost sacrifice. But in the scourging and crowning there was not only nothing of the sublimity of Calvary, but there was the utmost degradation. Did we not know that every incident of the Passion of Our Lord was meant to teach us a mighty lesson, we would think that degradation needless.

Looking on the cut and bleeding body of Our Lord crowned with thorns, helpless before the mockery of the soldiers, two thoughts come to us. It was for love of us that Our Lord came on earth, was born, suffered, and died. In the quiet of the years of Nazareth and in the Three Years, He moved amongst men with majestic calmness, and men took Him and His works as a matter of course. They listened to His teachings, they brought their sick to Him for healing, and they ate of the miraculous food He gave them, but they did not understand. The narrative of the Gospel is full of His pathetic laments that show even His Apostles did not get His point of view, and they and the people were so ingrained with the Old Law traditions that they could not understand His mission of love. He was a wonder to them, indeed, and they marveled at His wisdom, but the human mind becomes accustomed even to the marvelous. Had our Lord gone to Calvary in the majesty of His divinity and offered Himself on a cross, it would have been an epic theme, a tale to be told from father to son, that the God of Heaven had died for man. Appreciative souls would have spent their lives in meditation on it and in thanksgiving, but the world would have ranked it with other tales of its heroes, and the object of the act would have been lost in the sublimity of its performance. There was need to shock the world into knowing how much God loved us, and Pilate's cry, "Behold the Man," is a

challenge that none can question. Stunned by the spectacle of Our Savior scourged and crowned in mockery for love of us, who can doubt His love! Made brother to us, "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears," who can fail to gain strength for his own pains and trials from the Divine Sufferer!

From the moment when Lucifer and his cohorts flung their rebel cry, "We will not serve," in the face of their God, pride and ambition have ruled the world. The clutching hands of the favored pair in Eden stretched to "be as gods," and Babel's ruins told the same tale. "Man never is, but always to be blessed," and, in pursuit of that will-o'-the-wisp, he flings down his fellow men and mounts higher on the prostrate bodies of his nearest and dearest. History's ages are stained with the names of men whose deeds in gaining power are shame to mankind, and whose use of power gained was maniacal. Few know how to drink the cup of authority in sobriety, and the world is filled with the moans of sufferers under the lash of power in the hands of men made mad with pride of place. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

That we might see the gruesome jest it is for a man clothed in the cloak of "brief authority" to strut before his fellows as if made of different clay and as though no grave yawned for him and retribution beyond the grave, Our Divine Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth allowed Himself to be stripped, bound to a pillar and beaten with whips. Pilate had said: "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and I have power to release thee?" Our Lord answered: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me unless it were given thee from above" (John xix. 10, 11). And He allowed them to clothe Him in mockery of His kingship in a regal cloak and diadem and rod of authority that Pilate and the Jews, and we, might learn the true worth of worldly honors and men's adulation. That we might learn "Naught is on earth or in the heavens but love." And that if, in God's Providence, we

be given authority "from above," that we come to know "it is excellent to have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant."

Before our thorn-crowned King, bleeding from the blows of Pilate's soldiers, humiliated for love of us, let us be brave to suffer for Him, and bear cheerfully whatever His love wills to give us for these few years of life.

"This hath He done and shall we not adore Him?
This shall He do and can we still despair?
Come let us quickly fling ourselves before Him,
Cast at His feet the burdens of our care.

"Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH SORROWFUL MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

Our Lord Carries His Cross and is Crucified

THE futile efforts of Pilate to save Our Lord from the vengeful hate of the Jews had failed. He was no weakling, for a weakling could not hold the important position of Governor under the capricious Tiberius, but he throttled his sense of equity and his human sympathy for Our Lord, whom he knew to be innocent, lest the rabble whom he despised should bring about his downfall from the place of power he loved. So does many another strong man in office, tenacious of power, sell his birthright for a less savory mess than pottage. "We have no king but Cæsar," they cried, and Pilate trembled in dread, succumbed and gave his official consent to the horrible injustice. "And he delivered him unto them to be crucified. . . . And after they had mocked him [the soldiers] took off the cloak from him and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him" (Matthew xxvii. 26, 31). "And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew, Golgatha" (John xix. 17). "And it was the third hour and they crucified him" (Mark xv. 25).

In these few words the Evangelists set before us the scene of the greatest tragedy the world has ever seen. No human words in any language could adequately describe the momentous thing, and so the matter-of-fact statement

of the Gospel must suffice. For us, however, faith is the "open sesame" that swings back the wall of the centuries and we see the vision of that day of days.

The sun blazed with near noontime heat as the procession passed into the narrow, dirty road that descended from the Pretorium into the Tyropeon Valley, and bending westward climbed the steep hillside between lines of houses, from whose windows and walls curious faces peered at the imposing array of the mounted centurion, the armed guards surrounding the three figures, each with a placard about his neck and laboring under a cross, and the usual motley company of city idlers unnoticing and unnoticed by the priests and Scribes and Pharisees in the crowd, whose sedate bearing illy concealed their glee over the success of their nefarious scheme. At the city walls, beyond which stood Calvary, many country folk coming in to spend the Passover in Jerusalem turned and joined the crowd, eager for the unwonted spectacle of a crucifixion of criminals. One of these countrymen, named Simon of Cyrene, was impressed by the soldiers to carry the cross behind Our Lord, and once in the way a pious woman named Veronica moved with pity for the pathetic figure so weak and worn, wiped His face with a napkin. Tender-hearted women also wept at the sad sight of Him suffering in the sunshine. Thus the procession came to the place of execution, and with great nails His hands and feet were fastened, and He hung on the cross until death released Him from His agony.

In all ages since that day, in all tongues and all places, has the tale been told, and always faith has seen hovering about the central Figure of that procession untold millions of God's angels, for He, the weary, worn Man, weak, faint, bloodstained and bruised is Our Savior, the God of Heaven and earth, Who from love of us underwent the ignominy of that way of the Cross, the triumphal march of love that closed the Three Years. Crowned He had been by Pilate's soldiers, and now He goes to His enthronement on the cross.

Only God Himself could have planned such a closing of His mission amongst men.

Had He willed to do so, Our Lord could have made an act of reparation that would have wiped out the sins of the world. But to what purpose would this have been when man in the pride of his free will could pile again sin on sin! Had He so willed, He could have summoned the legions of His angels about Him, and the multitudes whom He had fed and healed, and the kings of the world, and with these attending, richly caparisoned He could have ascended the mountain and in utmost dignity stretched Himself on the cross and offered His life for the sins of the world. It would have been the most sublime spectacle the world could know, but what use would it have been to the after-ages of a sin-stricken world! No, Our Lord came not to dazzle the world with His majesty, but to save it and make it know how to keep its salvation, bought by His Most Precious Blood. Sin had caused the dark madness that held the world, and the world must be made to know this in unmistakable and most emphatic way by the expiation of the God-Man.

In the very beginning John, standing at the ford clothed in picturesque skins roughly girded, his eyes burning with the fire of his mission, had proclaimed the keynote of the Savior's coming. "Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew iii. 2). From the first days of His appearing amongst men, Our Lord had stated the purpose of His coming, "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matthew ix. 13). In plainest words and eloquent parable day after day He sought to impress upon the glory-loving Jews how His mission differed from their dreams of a victorious Messias leading triumphant armies to conquer Israel's enemies. The sheep that was lost and was found; the groat eagerly sought for and rejoicingly recovered; the starved and shamed prodigal boy met and embraced by his forgiving father, when the swine abandoned he returned

to that father's house and love; the multitudes miraculously fed; the comforting words that went with His favors: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Arise take up thy bed and go into thy house" (Matthew ix. 2, 6). His kindness to the woman standing with downcast eyes awaiting the punishment of her sin: "Hath no man condemned thee? . . . Neither will I condemn thee. Go and now sin no more" (John viii. 10, 11). Simon's house and the scornful Jews drawing away from the scented robes of the Magdalene: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47). These are the intaglios carved by His love that educate us to know and understand the Way of the Cross and Calvary. As the artist by significant details in his picture leads the eye to the central figure, so Our Lord in the years of His life by word and act leads us to appreciate the lesson of the cross.

Love must always pay its sweet penalty of sacrifice. Love cannot be content with words, it must externate itself in acts, and the greater the love, the greater the sacrifice. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). In this lies the world-wide difference between love and lust. Lust takes always and reaches greedily. "The horseleech hath two daughters that say: Bring, bring" (Proverbs xxx. 15). Love must give always, and is only happy in the giving. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son" (John iii. 16). That Son so loved the world that He gave Himself in uttermost sacrifice. The vision of that sacrifice has ever been the strength and inspiring comfort of every Christian. Whatever his own cross may be or how great, he sees himself gladly one of the procession of cross-bearing lovers at whose head marches Christ Our Lord. Yea, He has made it the very shibboleth of loving service. Not prayer nor preaching, nor vigil nor fast, is to be the badge of our tribe, but "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me"

(Luke ix. 23). When the mother of the Sons of Thunder pleaded recognition for her sons' kinship with Him in His kingdom, Our Lord said to them, "You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? My chalice indeed you shall drink" (Matthew xx. 22, 23). When the fires of the Holy Ghost cleared the minds of the Apostles so that they knew the way, the truth, and the life, they gladly spent themselves and were spent for Christ. The travail of the first centuries of the Church was made holy by the sacrifice of the Christians who gave their lives for their faith. In all the years since there has been no time when some persecution of the Church did not send its toll of martyrs to God. And in the millionfold ranks of those who believe, the fires of love have burned on the altars of sacrifice in all ages and places. Men and women vowed to lives of sacrifice in God's service are emulated by a host of others who suffer bravely the cares and trials of their lives, and carry their crosses of mental or physical distress, of poverty, or hardship of life, knowing that these are in no wise signs of God's anger, but rather of His love. The cry of St. Theresa, "To suffer or to die, O God," and the prayer of St. Mary Magdalen di Pazzi, "Not to die, but to suffer more and more for Thee," are echoed in the patient lives of the Catholics who bow to God's will and drink of the chalice of suffering because they are conscious of the touch of the loving hand of Him Who walked Jerusalem's streets and climbed the hill of Calvary bearing His cross.

What Calvaries of the heart Judgment Day will disclose to shame our "consciously unmortified lives!" For many walk the narrow way with cheerful faces whose souls are nailed to a cross, and they look from their Calvary out on the unknowing world and pray: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). For these the jeers of the world, the sting of faithless friendship, the stab wounds of ingratitude are forgotten before the crucifix and the vision of that Friday when He hung

on Calvary despised and scorned, but Himself forgiving and loving.

The touch of suffering "that makes the whole world kin," rings us about Calvary glad to suffer for and with Him who suffered so much for us. How small and puny our cross borne for Him in the shadow of His cross borne for us. How infinitesimal are our hurts from the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," when put beside the bruised body of our scourged and thorn-crowned Savior; nailed hands and feet, to the cruel Tree.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (John xii. 32), said Our Lord, and drawn by this Divine Magnet, souls sensitized in the sanctity of suffering are lifted up from the earth, above all sordid things and closer and closer to the Crucified. Whether our years of suffering be few or many, if our crucifixion be beside Him, there will come the reward of faithful, patient love. As the world with its weariness and pain melts away from our fading sight, we shall hear His voice: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," and He, our white-robed Viaticum, will bring us where "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apocalypse xxi. 4).

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST GLORIOUS MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Resurrection of Our Lord From the Dead

THE Sabbath Day that followed Good Friday was a long, weary day to the Apostles, as "they rested according to the Commandment" (Luke xxiii. 56). The sabbatical rest of their bodies made more acute their mental sufferings in the recollection of the awful tragedy of the day before. Stunned by the realization that their unspeakable happiness of Thursday night had terminated in the horrors of the later hours, and in the Crucifixion, they were incapable of any thought but the bitterest sorrow and remorse for their defection. Again and again came to their tortured minds the image of their Good Friend, abandoned by them whom He had trusted, and the tales they had heard of the scenes and of His words on Mount Calvary added an exquisite touch of horror. Then would come the memory of the upper room, and His sweet voice sounded again in their ears, His love and confidence, His prayer for them, and the great Feast of His own body and blood. He was soon to leave them, and yet they fled and left to His enemies Him who had been so kind to them. So once more the weary round of memory would bring them back to their defection. "Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier days." One there was who could console them, and they longed to go to her and tell her their grief. But how could they face His mother after having deserted Him in His hour of need? What a Sabbath! It ended as all things must end some time, and Peter, who had wept the hours through, braved even her sad eyes that

there might come the relief of telling her his remorse. He knew he would find her with the one faithful friend, and quickly in the early morning he went to the house of John, fell at her feet and sobbed out his sorrow. As his heart glowed with her words of kindness and sympathy there came in the utmost hurry the Magdalene with strangest story. She and Mary the mother of James and Salome had gone to the tomb with sweet spices to testify their devotion and complete the anointing that had been done so hurriedly on Friday. As they drew near the place a mighty earthquake made the ground quiver beneath their feet, and when they came in sight of the hillside, they had seen that the great stone at the door of the sepulcher was rolled back, "and going in they found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke xxiv. 3). Evidently the sacred tomb had been violated, and His enemies had taken away His body to work more harm to It, and she had run at once to His mother to tell the awful tale. Had she waited with the other women, she would have seen, as they did, the angels in "shining apparel," and heard the message: "Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly tell ye his disciples that he is risen; and behold he will go before you into Galilee; there you shall see him." When the women heard this "they went out quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy, running to tell his disciples" (Matthew xxviii. 5-8). Mary knew nothing of this, and her loving heart pictured yet more dreadful things done to the body she had seen taken from the cross scarred and marred.

Scarcely had she finished her story, broken by her sobs, than Peter and John set out to the tomb, running in great alarm. Here was an opportunity for action; at last they could do something, and burning with indignation and planning how they would gather His friends to rescue the sacred body, they came to the tomb followed by the Mag-

dalene who had stayed for a further word with the Blessed Virgin.

It must have been after Mary Magdalene had departed, that Our Lord appeared to His mother. No one else had yet seen Him, and to her first of all must He come to relieve her anguish and fill her heart with great joy. During the night, Our Lord's soul, having communicated the glad tidings to the blessed in Limbo, returned to the tomb and united itself with His body, and glorified and alive, rose silently through the rocks, leaving the seal intact, the stone unmoved, and the guards in complete ignorance of His presence and that of His angels who accompanied Him. Thus had He come into the world at His birth, in the silence of the night, His mother's virginal body intact. As then His angels had given external signs of the great event, by the brightness in the heavens and their song and message to the shepherds, so now the earth quaked as the angels rolled back the stone and broke the governmental seal, while the guards fled away, terrified witnesses of these supernatural signs.

We believe and rejoice in the indisputable proof of Our Lord's divinity shown forth so clearly by the testimony of many witnesses, and capped by St. Paul's golden words: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians xv. 14).

The world sodden in sin that had groped in the gloom of the ages of promise, stood radiant that Easter morn, "the Son being now risen," and heartened in the hope made firm by the miracle of the Resurrection, cried out joyously: "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians xv. 55).

This keystone in the arch of our faith has held us up in our grief when death has taken one of our beloved, and above the noise of the world our souls numbed in sorrow have heard the thrilling words: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me although he be dead shall live" (John xi. 25).

In the strength and comfort of the Resurrection that buoys us up, and looking forward to our own resurrection when this weary round we call life is finished, we praise and adore Our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. As truly as He rose that Easter morn, He is with us now, His glorified body hidden in the Sacramental Veils. That we may come to know more fully His life of love in the Host, let us recall the consoling human touches in the great mystery of His Resurrection.

What strikes us first of all in meditating on the incidents of the Resurrection, is that the angels appeared and spoke to the women who had been faithful to Our Lord and showed their loving sympathy by accompanying Him to Calvary and there remaining with Him to the very end. Their loyalty merited that the heart-breaking memory of Calvary should be wiped away first for them in the joyful message of the angels.

When St. Peter and St. John arrived at the tomb, though John's love had outrun his companion, "he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying, but yet he went not in" (John xx. 5). His exclamation of wonder quickened Peter's penitent lagging. With a touch of his characteristic impetuosity, restored by his new resolution to atone for his defection, Peter instantly "went into the sepulcher and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been about his head not lying with the linen cloths, but apart wrapped up into one place" (John xx. 6, 7). Such care would not have been displayed by any enemy who had despoiled the tomb, St. Peter knew, but he knew nothing more, "for as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John xx. 9), and there was no angel to speak comforting words of explanation. The threefold denial had not won him special favor, and Peter must wait yet bewildered and sorrowful until the angel's message would come to him, to add to his shame, from the faithful women who had been so favored. "Then that other disciple also went in." John needed no angel's

words. The folded cloths told him clearly the story of what had occurred, and his mind, that was in the years to come to be crystallized by his great love into Apocalyptic vision, understood what Peter's mind missed, "and he saw and believed." "The disciples therefore departed again to their home" (John xx. 8, 10). What a world of difference in those two now! Both had been with Him in the Three Years; both had seen and heard the wonders of those years, but one had denied and the other had stood by the cross, and so one "saw and believed," "and Peter went away wondering in himself at that which was come to pass" (Luke xxiv. 12).

So to-day many come to God's Church. For some there is an angel's message, for others there is no need for angel's words. The historic existence of the Church, her care of the poor, her wonderful organization, or some other evidence, like the folded napkin to John, manifest clearly to them the divine origin of the Church, while to others who see the same, even as Peter saw, follows only bewilderment, and like him they go away "wondering at that which was come to pass."

But there was another to whom Our Lord's Sacred Heart turned on that Easter morn. Not yet would He manifest Himself to the recreant Apostles, for a while they must be left in darkness and their faith tried in the test of the women's message. After the interview with His holy mother, too sacred for even the inspired writers to record, Our Lord sought out the Magdalene, ever loving, ever faithful, since that day in the house of Simon the Pharisee when her grateful love had won forgiveness in the tears of penitence with which she washed His feet, until the dark day when standing with His mother she had seen the end.

When she had told His mother and the Apostles of the rifled tomb, her love drew her again to the garden, for it was a sweet consolation even to be near the place where His body had lain. "Now as she was weeping, she stooped

down and looked into the sepulcher, and she saw two angels in white'' (John xx. 11, 12). Absorbed in her grief she paid little attention to them, their brilliantly robed figures were not her Beloved, and her grieving love sought only to find His body and bathe His feet with her tears in death as she had in life, and wipe the wounds riven in them with her hair and anoint them with perfumes as she had done that other day in the long ago, and so her answers to the angel's questions were purely mechanical. Maybe this other, whom she saw mistfully through her tears as she turned back from the tomb, would know? ''Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?'' Disappointment again. It was a stranger, the gardener perhaps, for ''she knew not that it was Jesus,'' and she wearily asked: ''Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away'' (John xx. 15). Ah, this is no gardener who thrills her with her name spoken in that voice that had burned her very soul: ''Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace.'' Her heart leaped in the joy of finding Him not a cold, dead thing of memories, but alive and calling her. ''Rabboni,'' she cried, and flung herself at the dear feet. First of all the world, after His mother, she ''out of whom he had cast seven devils'' (Mark xvi. 9) sees the Risen Lord. What a wealth of sweet comfort to all sinners who, strong in His pardon, stand with the Crucified on the Mount of Safety beside His cross, and spend their lives in His loving service out of gratitude.

We may not be able like the Magdalene to see the tomb and the bright robed angels, but if in gratitude to the Lord who has forgiven our many sins, we can give comfort and sympathy to our neighbor who is nailed to a cross of sorrow or affliction in physical or mental distress; if we can stand by the cross of him who has been scourged by the cruel world, crowned with the thorns of failure and abandoned by his friends, and by our sympathy give him comfort and strength; if we go forth with sweet spices, to anoint the bruised and torn bodies of our brothers who have been

vanquished in life's struggle, then as surely as the Magdalene found her quest when all seemed hopeless and the empty tomb seemed to mock her grief, so surely shall we find Him if we truly seek Him, though to our tired eyes He may seem hidden and come in as strange a guise as "the gardener." His voice will call our name and we shall know Him and fall at His feet and be at rest, "as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew xxv. 40).

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SECOND GLORIOUS MYSTERY

The Ascension of Our Lord

THE Scripture narrative of the Forty Days gives us such a depressing picture in the persistent refusal of the disciples to believe in the Resurrection of Our Lord until proved to them beyond all question, that we are divided between impatience at their crassness and admiration at the loving condescension with which Our Lord satisfied their childish incredulity. But as compensation we come to see that the gradual dissipation of their unbelief serves to build up irrefragable proof of the truth of His Resurrection.

When the Magdalene at length controlled the transport of joy at having seen and spoken to the Lord, "she went and told them that had been with him, who were mourning and weeping. And they hearing that he was alive, and had been seen by her, did not believe" (Mark xvi. 10, 11).

When the holy women obeying the angel's message, "went out quickly, running to tell the disciples. Behold Jesus met them saying: All hail. Fear not. Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see me" (Matthew xxviii. 8, 10). "And going back they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. And these words seemed to them as idle tales and they did not believe them" (Luke xxiv. 9, 11).

When Cleophas and his companion sought relief from their grief and disappointment by a walk into the country that Sunday, away from the gloom of the sad company,

the change of scene could not cure their restless thoughts, "and they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus himself also drawing near went with them. But their eyes were held that they should not know him" (Luke xxiv. 14-16). As one consoles a grieving child by sympathetic listening to his infantile tale of woe, so He listened to them. Then their hearts burned in the soothing of their sorrow as His sweet voice explained the Scripture to them, and they saw through the mist of their grief the need of the Passion and Death of the Christ, "so to enter into His glory." Calmness came to their minds, the first since the dreadful Friday, and in the shadows of the falling night they begged this comforting Stranger to stay and sup with them, "and they knew Him in the breaking of bread" (Luke xxiv. 35). Here was no tale of hysterical women. He was indeed alive, and they had seen Him and spoken with Him. They must hasten back to Jerusalem and tell those wonders to the other saddened ones. "And they going told it to the rest; neither did they believe them" (Mark xvi. 13). These primitive minds numbed by grief were not capable of reasoning. The joy of the favored two, and of Simon, who had also seen Him, and of the women, only plunged them into deeper lonesomeness and made them feel more forsaken and forgotten.

"Mourning and weeping," they huddled, crushed in the stolid sorrow of simple-minded folk, behind the shut doors of that upper room in the house of John Mark, "for fear of the Jews." Suddenly at a late hour on that same day, "Jesus stood in the midst of them and saith to them: Peace be to you. It is I, fear not. But they being troubled and frighted, supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them: Why are you troubled and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle and see for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have. And when he had said this, he

shewed them his hands and feet. But while yet they believed not and wondered for joy." It was too good to be true. It must be an apparition conjured by their very desire that He come to them; again the primitive mind so difficult of conviction. But divine love suits itself even to the primitive mind. "He said: Have you here anything to eat? And they offered him a piece of broiled fish, and a honeycomb. And when he had eaten before them, taking the remains he gave to them" (Luke xxiv. 36-43). Wide-eyed, they watched Him eat the frugal food; this is no trick of their senses, for here in their hands were the remains of the meal, therefore He had indeed eaten. This was evidence that at last convinced the primitive mind. "The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord" (John xx. 20). Thomas, though, was not present, and so chagrined was he on hearing what he had missed that he declared that he would not believe unless he not only saw with his own eyes but satisfied his other senses as well. His blustering was silenced, however, when on the next Sunday Our Lord appeared in the upper room again and appealed directly to him to prove for himself the reality of the Resurrection. The sound of that voice, the beauty ineffable of those eyes were proof indeed, "and Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28). Thus through the tender love of the Risen Lord, pitying the unreasoning sorrow of the Apostles and bending Himself to the level of their childish minds in proving Himself truly risen from the dead, was built up the bulwark of our faith in the Resurrection, so that "blessed are they who have not seen and have believed" (John xx. 29).

Convinced at last in the reality of the Resurrection, the Apostles clung to Him during the following days. Gladly, though not understanding, they listened to His words imparting mysterious powers and strange gifts to be their credentials in the after days, as His representatives. "In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with

new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover" (Mark xvi. 17, 18). Gladly, they saw Peter rehabilitated, and by his threefold profession of faith and love, in utmost humility, atone for his previous denials. What swift, glorious days were those with Him when "he opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and he said to them: thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day, and that penance and the remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 45-47). Their hearts swelled with the importance of this intimacy, in which not only was their dereliction forgiven, but they received proofs of His closest friendship now and forever. "And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matthew xxviii. 20), He said to them, "but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

What could they think after these tremendous words but that they were to be the instruments to bring back the glory of their people, and that their commission meant earthly power and splendor to Him and to them. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6), they cried out, for their minds had not yet been cleared by the Holy Spirit, and their glorious destiny was hidden from them yet a while. Happy in the memory of the forty days and dreaming of the deeds of the future, they listened to Him as they walked towards Bethania. "And lifting up his hands, he blessed them. And it came to pass whilst he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up to heaven" (Luke xxiv. 50, 51). Bewildered at their bereavement, the Apostles stood dazed and uncertain what to do. "And while they were

beholding him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven'' (Acts i. 10, 11). ''And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy'' (Luke xxiv. 52).

CHAPTER XIX

THE THIRD GLORIOUS MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles

WHEN the spell of the Apostles' sorrow was broken by the cheerful words of the angel on Mount Olivet: "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven" (Acts i. 11), the Apostles "went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke xxiv. 52), back to the house of John Mark and to the upper room. The clustered memories of that room made it sacred to the eleven, as it has been sacred to the millions of Christians who have made pilgrimage there in all the centuries from all parts of the world. There He had girded Himself and washed their feet. There He had sat at table with them, intimate sign of their close friendship. There He had done the ineffable Thing, when in solemn words he had declared the bread and wine to be His own body and blood, and had placed It in their trembling hands and they had eaten. Glowing with the thrill of that Holy Communion, they had heard, though they did not understand, His command: "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke xxii. 19). From that room they had gone with Him happily to Gethsemane, and to that room they had returned Friday evening heartbroken and smitten with remorse. There too He had come to them so glorious on the Sunday, and they had seen the wounds and heard His voice. In that room He had come often afterwards and taught them the great tidings of their mission, and talked of His love for them in spite of all. So, in that

room would assuredly happen what He had foretold, the coming of the Paraclete, the Comforter. They therefore sought the room as often as they were not "in the temple praising and blessing God" (Luke xxiv. 53). Each day they looked for the wonder and after ten days it happened.

In the hush of the waiting their hearts beat anxiously, for it was again Sunday the day He had made sacred. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting." Startled, they looked into one another's face in bewilderment. What could it be? He had always come to them swiftly and silently without warning. What then could mean the mighty wind? "And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon everyone of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 2-4). Men who have escaped death threatening them by asphyxiation or by some swiftly moving engine of destruction have described their sensations in the first moments of realizing that they lived and the danger was gone. They have told of the exulting joy that then filled their souls. How sweet the air sucked into lungs compressed by fear; how bright the sunshine! They have said it was as if they were filled for the first time with life, as if all life before had been an empty shadowy thing. In some such manner does the sacred Scripture's words make us understand the feeling of the Apostles. "They were filled with the Holy Ghost." There was room for nothing else in their lives but the exulting joy of this new sensation that thrilled them to their souls' depths. As a man looking with the naked eye at a distant landscape sees indeed the shape and form of the objects there, but in a dim and hazy manner, finds when he places a telescope before his eyes everything jumps into sharp definition, so the Apostles, "full of the Holy Ghost," now saw the Three Years in true perspective. The miracles, the sermons, the parables, that seemed difficult to understand then, now they saw as a whole, each in its place as part of a symmetrical

plan. Like a haunting strain of melody in the overture that one finds developed and complete in an aria of the opera, the feeding of the multitudes, the sermon by the seaside, the parable of the great supper and the promise of Capharnaum (that "hard saying!") were now plain to the Apostles, and the memory was like a golden thread leading them through the mazes to the upper room and to Him with bread and cup, saying: "This is my body, this is my blood" (Mark xiv. 22, 24). The upsetting doctrine He had preached of forgiveness for injuries, of good to be returned for evil, of neighbor loving as important as the love of God, of the daily cross to be carried as badge of His discipleship; all this, so confusing then, was plain now as their minds enlightened by the Holy Ghost saw clearly the meaning of Calvary's great cross and its Bleeding Burden, and His message from lips cracked with cruel thirst: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34).

They were at first stunned to silence by the great thing that had come to them, and the wonders of the revelation that overpowered them. As one who sees for the first time from a lofty peak the splendor of the snow-capped Alps is silenced by the beauty of God's work stretching away before him in its wondrous majesty, and then feels an overwhelming need for words to express his emotions, so the Apostles "began to speak with divers tongues according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii. 4). Once they had been with the Lord when He gave sight to a man born blind, and they had seen the wonder in his face as he looked for the first time and saw God's beautiful world, and they had heard him babbling: "I see men as it were trees walking" (Mark viii. 24). So now they found themselves putting into words in various languages—not the least of their new powers—their overflowing feelings of wonder at their new condition.

Poor, ignorant, unlettered, they had been the crudest raw material for God's finishing. Had Our Lord selected

for His Apostles from the rich and cultured scholars of the day, and there were very many of these, who could have said what was natural and what supernatural in their teachings? Now there could be no such question when these, whom all knew as fearful, timid, shrinking rustics, stammering their few and simple thoughts in uncultured patois accented by rough brogue, came bravely forth into the streets and with convincing words of heavenly inspired logic, delivered their message in clearest tones of foreign tongues, so that all who heard them, "devout men out of every nation under heaven there dwelling in Jerusalem, were confounded in mind because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue" (Acts ii, 5, 6).

Never was there such another sermon as on that Pentecostal day, when "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke to them." With the ease of a practiced orator and the logic of their shrewdest lawyer, this one-time untutored countryman quotes from the sacred writings the most telling prophecies. With the skill of a veteran controversialist he builds up his arguments for the divinity of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as you also know." In clearest reasoning he draws his conclusion and leads up to the dénouement. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know most certainly that God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus whom you have crucified" (Acts ii. 14, 22, 36).

Who could ever fancy Peter, the rude Galilean, delivering of himself such a masterful discourse and in lordly manner of one having authority laying down conditions to these men from whom he had shrunk away in fear but a few days before, and who now listened and looked in awe. "Now when they had heard these things they had compunction in their hearts, and they said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles: what shall we do, men brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized everyone

of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off whomsoever the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort them saying: Save yourselves from this perverse generation'' (Acts ii. 37-40). Meekly as from a master the multitude received and obeyed his command. ''They therefore that received his word were baptized, and there were added in that day about three thousand souls.'' These first fruits of the New Law became a people apart, changed in every way through the Holy Ghost, ''and they were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul; many wonders also and signs were done by the Apostles in Jerusalem and there was great fear in all. And all they that believed were together and had all things common. Their goods and possessions they sold and divided them to all, according as every one had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart. Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord increased daily together such as should be saved'' (Acts ii. 41-47).

Thus burgeoned the mustard tree. Strengthened and comforted by such sudden and fervent acceptance of their mission, the Apostles went forth ''to teach all nations.'' The joy of the first days' exultation, however, gave way to the serious task of facing hostile peoples who resented this new Gospel because it would disturb their lives of pleasure and ease. Soon the Apostles learned the fulfillment of the prophecy: ''They will put you out of the synagogues; whosoever killeth you will think he doth a service to God'' (John xvi. 2). But wherever they went and whatever hardship they suffered the Pentecostal vision remained vivid and an inspiration, and they gladly spent themselves and were spent for Him their Lord. They not

only preached but lived "Christ and Him crucified;" they welcomed the sufferings that made them like to Him, and gladly gave themselves to the death that opened heaven's gates to them and gave them Him for eternal reward.

CHAPTER XX

THE FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into Heaven

WHEN Our Lord ascended into heaven the Apostles looked to the Blessed Virgin with greatest love and reverence as the connecting link in their lives. In the greater love for Him that filled their souls when their Pentecostal knowledge made them see clearly, they clung to her, avid to learn more and more of Him whom they preached and to whose love they sought to draw all men. To her these specially favored friends of His were particularly dear. If she delighted in telling them of the wondrous hidden years at Nazareth (and how her proud mother-heart did delight in the memory of those happy days!) they never wearied of recounting to her the details of the Three Years, those years when she must needs serve by standing and waiting while He was about His Father's business. Eagerly she listened to these favored familiars as they told the stories of His miracles, His kindnesses, His generous love for sinners, and His great humility. It was sweet converse indeed, and tradition gives us a beautiful tale of the Blessed Virgin thus conversing with St. Luke as he painted her portrait, and to this we owe the intimate details of Our Lord's early life given in that Evangelist's Gospel.

When the time came that the Apostles "going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed" (Mark xvi. 20),

the Blessed Virgin remained with St. John, to whose care she had been committed by Our Lord. Happy indeed was "that Apostle whom Jesus loved" in guarding and providing for his precious charge. Whether at Jerusalem or Ephesus, John's house was a place of pilgrimage for the Apostles. To her they came gladly to recount the triumphs of their mission, the wonders done in the name of her beloved Son. To her they came for comfort and solace in the dark days, for not always were they received in gladness, but a look at her sweet face, a few words in her dear voice, and they went on their way again rejoicing. Her mother-heart knew well how to console them and give them fresh energy.

Not only to the Apostles, but to all, believers and unbelievers, the Blessed Virgin was a tower of strength and a sweet influence in the world. They who believed looked with awe on her, the Mother of God, who had held the Savior of the world in her arms "when she was kissed by God in Galilee." But awe melted into love unspeakable when she spoke to them familiarly of Him who had placed in her mother-arms all the world to cherish and love. They who did not believe could not but feel her influence, and drawn by curiosity their love was won by her beauty of soul and body, and out of love for her came the great love for her Son that swept away all unbelief. Thus the years went by with her always united to Him in spirit and each day really with Him in the beatific moments of Holy Communion in the Eucharist. Yearning to be with Him in Heaven, yet she was patient and resigned to His will to do the work of her place in the world.

At length her work was completed, her exile ended. The Apostles having finished their preaching in Judea and Galilee were no longer novices but seasoned veterans. The world lay before them waiting for the Gospel and they must go. The Blessed Virgin had passed her sixtieth year on earth when the Angel of Death came to her—a second Annunciation that filled her soul with joy. Tradition teaches

that all the Apostles were assembled at her death excepting St. Thomas. When he arrived, so great was his grief at not having been permitted to bid farewell to the mother of his Lord, that the tomb was opened, but her immaculate body had been taken up to heaven and the receptacle was found filled with fragrant flowers. This Apostolic tradition is the foundation of the belief of the Church in the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. While it has not yet been defined as a dogma of faith, only an impious and blasphemous mind could suppose that the body that had borne and nurtured Our Lord would be condemned to the common fate of man, to decompose and return to the dust of the earth.

Almighty God has honored the bodies of many saints of the Church and miraculously preserved them from dissolution because of their faithful service and as a sign of His favor before men. Much more deserving of more signal mark of His favor is the body of His mother.

The body of St. Cecilia was so preserved and lies incorrupt in the crypt of the church in the Trastevere that was the palace of her family and given by her to be used as a church. In the year 230 A.D., the saint was butchered by the imperial executioner after an imprisonment for three days in the intense heat of her bath had failed to cause her death. Her body wrapped in silken cloths was buried in the Calixtus Catacomb, and in 821, when Pope Pascal I removed it to the church where it now rests, he found the saint's body "fresh and perfect as when it was first laid in the tomb, and clad in rich garments mixed with gold, with linen cloths stained with blood rolled up at her feet, lying in a cypress coffin. The holy Pontiff lined the coffin with fringed silk, spread over the body a cover of silk gauze, and then, placing it within a sarcophagus of white marble, deposited it under the high altar of the Church of St. Cecilia, in Trastevere. Nearly eight hundred years afterwards Cardinal Sfondrati of the title of St. Cecilia made considerable alterations in the church,

and in the course of his excavations in the sanctuary, came upon a wide vault beneath the altar, containing two marble sarcophagi. Trustworthy witnesses were summoned and in their presence one of the sarcophagi was opened and found to contain a coffin of cypress wood. The Cardinal himself drew back the coffin lid. First appeared the precious lining and silk gauze with which Pascal had covered the body nearly eight centuries before. Its color had faded, but the fabric was still entire, and through its transparent folds could be seen the shining gold of the robes in which the martyr was clothed. After pausing a moment, the Cardinal gently removed the silken covering and the virgin form of St. Cecilia appeared in the very attitude in which she had breathed her last on the pavement of the house. She lay clothed in her robes of golden tissue on which were still visible the glorious stains of her blood, and at her feet were the linen cloths mentioned by Pascal. Lying on the right side with her arms extended in front of her body, she looked like one in deep sleep. The head was turned downwards, the knees slightly bent. The body was perfectly incorrupt, and by a special miracle, retained after more than thirteen hundred years, all its grace and modesty.''[1] For five days the body lay exposed for the veneration of the faithful, when after Pontifical Mass by Pope Clement VIII the tomb was again closed, Cardinal Sfondrati had the present high altar erected over it, and beneath the altar one sees to-day the beautiful marble statue of the saint depicted as the sculptor, Carlo Maderno, saw the body many times during its exposure. In 1901, during the decorating and enlarging of the crypt in St. Cecilia's by the Cardinal Protector, Cardinal Rampolla, the great silver casket weighing four hundred pounds was uncovered, the Cardinal wiped off the stains and without opening the inner casket wrapped it in precious stuffs.

In the crypt of the great Cathedral of Milan the pilgrim

[1] Northcote's ''Roma Sotteranea,'' p. 156.

looks with awe on the preserved body of St. Charles Borromeo. Robed in his pontifical vestments and surrounded with the rich gifts of grateful clients, the Cardinal Archbishop lies in state, his aquiline profile as distinct as when he spent himself and was spent for the poor and plague-stricken of his beloved Milan.

Beneath the altar of one of the side chapels of the Capuchin Church in the Piazza Barberini at Rome, the body of Blessed Crispin of Viterbo may be seen incorrupt, clad in the garb of a lay brother of the Capuchins, preaching eloquently of God's signal favor to one who served Him faithfully.

In the chapel of the Poor Clares at Bologna the incorrupt body of St. Catherine sits upright in a great chair on a dais, clothed in her Franciscan habit and with hands and arms as supple as when she gave her soul to God in 1463. Many more instances could be cited of God's preserving intact the bodies of His faithful servants. No chemical moisture or atmospheric phenomenon can explain these miracles; it is simply the act of God suspending nature's laws that we may admire His favors to His saints.

The body of the Blessed Virgin was in all qualities as far above the greatest saint as was her immaculate soul, and therefore her pure body was taken by her Son to Himself in heaven. As a child of Adam, she paid the debt of death, but as no sin ever sullied her, so no penalty of sin could be visited on her body. Body and soul must she share with her Eternal Son the mysteries of eternity.

In meditating on the mystery of Our Lady's Assumption, we must give thought to ourselves. Some day our bodies, too, will be joined again after death with our souls, and this union will last for all eternity either in God's presence or apart from Him. Our fate is in our own hands. These bodies that are now our servants or our masters will share in the reward or punishment that God's justice must mete out to us. For the wise lovers of God, a few years of pain and mortification here in this life seem but a small price to

pay for an eternity of bliss with God. For those who have no sense of proportion, who, "pawn their souls for the devil's dismal stock of returns," to whom ease and luxury of this life make eloquent appeal, there will be a sad awakening. The soul "cabined, cribbed and confined" in this life needs the body as helpmate to eternity. The body that serves faithfully the behests of the spirit and is amenable to reason will share the soul's joys in the resurrection.

We have the body and soul of Our Divine Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He walked the earth a man amongst men, and our bodies are dear to Him because He shared our nature. To-day His glorified body reigns in heaven and beside Him the glorious body of His mother. Yearningly we look towards them, reaching out to the day when we, too, will be delivered from this bondage of death. Around their great throne are the multitudes of the saints, and our place awaits us there. The Blessed Virgin was united always in spirit with her Son; so can we be. Her days were sweetened by Himself in Holy Communion; so can ours be. To reach our destined place, we needs must follow their way. In our Communion of saints will come the resurrection of the body and the Life Everlasting.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIFTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY OF THE ROSARY

The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin

WHEN the immaculate body of Our Blessed Lady was assumed into heaven and united with her stainless soul, womanhood was apotheosized. From the day that Eve hearkened to the tempter and through the weakness of her flattered vanity brought misery to her children, her daughters walked the earth in the shadow of her guilt, and her sons in unforgiving recrimination made excuse for their derelictions in the words of their first father: "The woman tempted me and I did eat." "The trail of the serpent was over them all."

Woman paid dearly for her first triumph over her mate in the degradation meted out to her by the law that made her subordinate to him in all things. "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power and he shall have domination over thee" (Genesis iii. 16). Honored only as a necessary vehicle for procreation, woman was forced to accept her inferiority, however resentful of the condition, always hopeful of the release that would come to her through the mother of the Messias in whose glory she would share. But not even her most sanguine dreams could picture the splendid reality of that release when God Himself would be born of woman.

The heroines of Jewry—Sara, Rachel, Rebecca, and Ruth —were paragons of maternity and uxorial servility, while Esther, Jehel, and Judith were exotics in the drab commonplace of domestic drudgery whose avatar was the valiant woman of the Book of Proverbs.

The Gentile world looked on woman as the soulless chattel that China and India counted her in our day, and that she is still considered where Occidental tradition has not yet broken her fetters. Quiescent, but never content, woman went her weary way through the ages, groaning under the primeval curse of her femininity until God's bright angel, Gabriel, swooped into the gloom, and at God's command raised her and placed her on her proper throne, left vacant since that day in Eden when stooping she "saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to the eyes and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave to her husband who did eat" (Genesis iii. 6). Since that sublime moment when God so favored her, Christian woman sharing in the honor of God's mother, has held her place on that "throne of ivory overlaid with finest gold," and whether virgin, wife, or mother is man's helpmate, his ministering angel and inspiration.

Triumphant over death and the grave in the victory of her Son, the Blessed Virgin, body and soul, was greeted by the glad hosts of angels and saints and crowned their Queen by Him who had created all. No human words could attempt to describe that coronation. We read with awe the Egbertine Order for the coronation of the emperors, and even its mutilated version followed in our own time thrills us as we read the majestic solemnity of the function by which the king is inducted into his high office. The coronation of the Pope in the solemn ritual of Roman tradition that metamorphoses prince or peasant, and gives the tremendous power of the Keys into the trembling hands of him who an hour before was like his fellows, is a spectacle beyond description. But only when we come into the Beatific Vision shall we know the majesty of that scene when God crowned His mother. Only then shall we understand the joy of the angels in their Queen. They had longed and waited for it from the moment when the valiant Michael and his cohorts had thrust out of the heavenly courts Lucifer and his rebels who had refused to serve the

Godhead of Him who was to be her Son. From their place before the throne they had watched the glorious Gabriel bear the message and they had exulted in its acceptance by the Maid of Nazareth. From the first instant of the Incarnation they had watched over her in jealous care. When He came forth from His Tower of Ivory on Christmas night they had proclaimed their joy above the sleeping world unconscious of its gift. Proudly they had looked on shepherd and king as they made homage to the Child. In the days and nights of Nazareth and Egypt they had watched and guarded, and in the Three Years they had sustained her in her loneliness even as they guarded Him. They had held her up in the dark days, and she knew their tender care when they would have saved Him from the rabble of Gethsemane, but He would not have it so and must needs walk the wine press alone. She knew their reverent solicitude as they gathered His Precious Blood from the walls and floors of the Pretorium and the dust of the streets to return it to the Holy Grail of His body in the tomb. They had stood with her in great sorrow as she looked on the Consummation of Calvary, and they supported her in the joys of Easter. They had rejoiced with her in the forty days, and in the years after they had treasured and cared for her waiting for this day when she would come home to them and they, invisible no more, Seraphim and Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels would welcome her radiant as their Queen in the spirit world forever.

Jubilant with joy vastly different from the angels', the saints of the Old Law gathered about the Blessed Virgin in her triumph and acclaimed her their Queen. Sincere as was the joy of the angels, it was prompted by loyalty to her Son who was their God, while the joy of the saints was the grateful pouring of spirits who had been redeemed from bondage, to her through whom had come that redemption.

We can readily fancy the gladness with which Adam and Eve greeted her, the mother of the Messias for whom they had longed in the scores of years of their penitential sweats and pains and in the centuries of their exile in Limbo. No less grateful was the homage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron and the vast multitude of the just who had lived their lives in the darkness of the primeval sin, and whose hearts had sickened with hope deferred and whose eyes had wearied searching the heavens for signs of Him who would lead them out of the valley of that death. With what proud joy the Prophets of Israel from Isaias to Malachy greeted her in the fulfillment of their message to men. They had been the favored mouths of the Lord and had shouted from the watch towers of time His words of hope and encouraging comfort to the world-worn and weary waiters for redemption, and they had scourged with scorpions the unbelievers and had heartened the just in the promise of her who would bring them the Savior. What joy of recognition throbbed through the purple-winged saints of the New Law! The Innocents, whose baby blood had poured a holocaust to the Man-God in His first days on earth. The Baptist, who saw again the face that had smiled on him when he had played with her Boy in Nazareth, in the days before the desert and the locusts and wild honey. Stephen, the first fruits of the Gospel, who could welcome her to that heaven he had seen open above him with the Son of Man sitting at the right hand, even as he sunk crushed beneath the cruel stones of them that hated Him whom he loved.

The Sacred Heart of Our Divine Lord rejoiced that day, as He rejoices now in the Blessed Sacrament, in the honor paid His mother, the chiefest of His creatures. Happy are we to be privileged to echo on earth the pæans of her praise in heaven. Happy are we to be allowed to gather about His throne on our altar, united in the Communion of Saints in grateful adoration of Him our God and loving reverence to her His mother and ours.

While we meditate on this wondrous mystery of a creature crowned Queen of Heaven, we must remember that the honor given Our Blessed Lady by her Son was not to her in the office of His mother only, but in reward of her loving sacrifice. Herein lies the lesson of this mystery for us. We are honored as she was by the great gift of our Catholic faith. We are privileged as she was by the favors our faith brings us in the Sacraments, and especially in the Blessed Sacrament of Our Lord's Living Body, yet these favors and privileges will not win us heaven. Apart from her high dignity as Mother of God, Our Lady by her correspondence with God's grace was the most perfect of His creation, and that perfection externated itself in the greatest love for Him that human being could be capable of. When the excited woman in the Gospels cried out in eulogy of the body that had borne and nourished Him, Our Lord set her straight by explaining that His mother was most blessed because she heard the word of God and kept it. The myriad graces Our Lady received were absorbed by her and corresponded with fully and therefore each instant of her life increased her sanctity. She was a free agent and could accept or reject these graces, but her love for God made her accept, and thus in fullest union with Him she was most perfect and immaculate in soul and body. She was crowned queen of the angels and saints because her love excelled them all. Love of God is the measure of our reward in heaven. We shall not be placed there by the position we hold on earth or the influence we have in the Church or the affairs of the world. "There are many mansions in My Father's house," said Our Lord, and these mansions are apportioned according to the love of God shown in the works of those who will occupy them. All in heaven are indeed filled with happiness, but the capacity for happiness is relative and depends on the intensity of love. Many vessels can be filled each to its capacity, but that capacity depends on the size of the vessel. The saints in heaven receive their reward not for the fasts and vigils

and labors they have undergone on earth, but for the love of God that prompted and sustained them in all these. The Catholic who hears Mass on Sundays and Holy days and observes the other Commandments will obtain heavenly reward in happiness, but much greater will be the capacity for happiness and consequently much greater the reward of the Catholic who through his love for God does works of supererogation, who hears daily Mass, receives Our Lord in Holy Communion frequently, and gives generously of his substance for the support of religion and the relief of his fellow man. In the exile of purgatorial yearnings there will come to many enlightenment too late, and the moans of regret for opportunities wasted will not break the fetters forged by their selfishness on earth when they did not know the time of their visitation. In the ruddy glare of the fires of Purgatory there will be a true sense of values, and the ease won by missing daily Mass and the comfort of luxuries purchased by stinting both the works of God's Church and charity to suffering humanity, will shine in that light as the dross they are, beside the tried gold of the treasure won by works of supererogation. God is most generous with His gifts and graces to us all. We are free agents and can accept or reject them. To reject them, or to accept them half-heartedly and without gratitude, means disaster in the strict accounting we shall have to render for five or four or one talent as our case may be. To accept these favors from God as the Blessed Virgin did, in love of Him that grows by what it feeds upon, means happiness here in the waiting, for we grow like what we love. "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet," and in the sweetness of His love life loses its bitterness, and the years of loving service are a golden Jacob's ladder on which we mount steadily nearer and nearer Our Beloved until He reaches through the veil and lifts us tenderly into the great company of the adoring angels and saints, with whom in all eternity we shall cry our hymn of praise and thanksgiving: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

CHAPTER XXII

THE FIRST STATION OF THE CROSS

Our Lord before Pilate

IN the quietness of the garden Our Lord's soul was sorrowful to death. In loneliness, as all great acts of every soul must be at the decisive moments of life, He had knelt aghast before the vision of sin, and then in supremest love had bowed to the will of His Father and accepted the chalice of sorrow. When the quietness was broken by the cries of the mob who had come out with swords and clubs to apprehend Him, no cohorts of His angels were summoned to His defense. Panoplied only in His great love for us He had submitted and gone with the accusers. The chief priests had their way with Him; their servants had mocked Him, whiling away the hours till daylight would permit them to carry Him before the secular judges. Pilate had quickly taken advantage of a technicality of residence to remand Him to Herod, and Herod had sent Him back in scorn to Pilate. Now after the tortures of the night, without rest, without nourishment, since the early evening of the night before, wearied but resolute, Christ stands before Pilate.

Let us picture the scene. The great God of heaven and earth who will come in power and majesty to judge the world stands for judgment Himself before a pagan, the governor of a morsel of the universe! Pilate was bewildered. Overcome by the tremendous responsibility that had been thrust on him, he seeks some outlet that will save his face and yet serve to excuse him from condemning the

just man before him. The leaders of the Jews exulting in the triumph that had brought into their power Him who had so discomforted them in the Three Years by His teaching, were shrewdly eager to bring about their desire and yet screen themselves behind the acts of Pilate. The mob of lookers-on, like all mobs, there to be played on, stupid and not knowing how they are being used. The Christ was calm, dignified serene. He had been betrayed to His enemies through the treachery of Judas. One who had lived in closest union with Him for the Three Years, had heard His golden words, and had seen the wondrous miracles, had betrayed Him. In the last few hours He had been denied by Peter. Impetuous, blundering Peter, honored and trusted beyond the others, whose reverence for his Master had made him boggle at the feet washing in the upper chamber, and yet he had denied Him. The others of the favored few were lurking somewhere in the darkness of the alleys of the city or hiding in far-off corners. All but the loving, understanding John, who knew that he could be of more help with his Master's mother than with the crowd at the judgment seat. So He was alone amidst the jubilant scribes and the chief priests who glared in hatred at His lone figure. They knew both from the Law and the Prophets and of their own knowledge that He was the Christ, but their selfish interests and ambition to remain leaders of the people stifled their consciences, and their hatred of Him who had thwarted them blinded their reason and sense of justice. They suborned false witnesses and made accusations against their own countryman and co-religionist before a pagan judge, the representative of the Roman rule they hated.

Pilate was disquieted and fearsome. His wife had begged him to have nothing to do with this just man as she had been warned in a dream that He should not be harmed. He went from room to room. He put nervous questions to the prisoner: "Art thou a king?" "What is truth?" he asked, and then fled, fearing the answer. In

one breath, he said, "I find no cause in this man" and in the next; "Dost thou hear what they allege against thee?" We can see him fidget as he seeks some way out, conscious all the time of the lowering faces and the sneers of the scribes and priests who detect his weakness and see through his subterfuges. They are determined, however, to gain their end and will not relent—and He is silent.

Pilate thinks he sees a way out. At the festival he may release a prisoner to the Jews. Perhaps they will agree to the release of this Man. He has brought out and put beside Him the notorious Barabbas, a robber and a murderer. The contrast is so striking between the calm confidence and noble dignified mien of the Man-God, and the hang-dog ruffianly Barabbas that Pilate trusts to the judgment of the crowd to extricate him from the snare the priests have laid for him to condemn Christ. "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matthew xxvii. 18).

Who can trust the mind of a mob? Left to themselves or if there had been some strong friends of Our Lord's there the result would have been different. Mobs are always the same. They cannot think for themselves but are ruled by the few. Skulking figures moved swiftly through the crowd, stealthy whispers were hissed in stupid ears, and when Pilate put the question: "Which shall I release to you?" the whole multitude cried out as one: "Away with this man and release unto us Barabbas." Pilate, more bewildered at the unexpected answer, said, "What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ?" The skulking figures had played well on the foolish crowd and there came the answering shout: "Let him be crucified" (Matthew xxvii. 22). So venomous was the cry that the pagan Pilate could not believe it possible for men to put such hatred into action. He tried to mollify them and said he would chastise Him, and let Him go, as he had found no cause of death in Him. But they insisted that He be crucified. Pilate washed his hands and said: "I am innocent

of the blood of this just man. Look you to it." The mob was now beyond all restraint and all appeal. The Man whom they had ordered to be crucified had fed them in the wilderness; He had raised their dead to life; He had healed their sick; He had spoken as no other man had ever spoken; but now inflamed as they were they saw Him only as a hateful thing to be rid of. "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matthew xxvii. 25), they cried. "And so Pilate being willing to satisfy the people released to them Barabbas, and delivered up Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified" (Mark xv. 15).

What an awful scene! What great need indeed for us to make what reparation we can to Him in the Blessed Sacrament for that hatred, that loneliness, and for the cruel cries from those whom He had always helped and who now burned in hate of Him. In the Sacred Host He is as calm and serene as when He stood alone before Pilate. To-day as then He is before the judgment of the world and He is condemned now as then and by the same types of people. There are those among us who know as the chief priests knew that He is the Christ. They have the Sacred Scriptures, God's own word. They have the tradition of the centuries. They know that no man would have dared to invent or add to the record such a tremendous thing as to teach that what seemed bread and wine was the body and blood of Our Lord. They knew that had the Apostles concocted such a doctrine it would not have been believed even from them and so they know it must have come from Christ Himself, as He had foretold again and again. Yet they are filled with hatred of Him and His yoke and through their own selfishness and that they may continue to be leaders themselves in their own circles they deny and seek to condemn Him now as then. They would make a liar of Him and His dying words a falsehood.

There are others now as then weak and vacillating like Pilate, who seek a compromise and would therefore wrest His words from their true and obvious meaning. They

fidget in nervous bewilderment and wring their hands and ask questions, and fly because they fear the answer.

Again there is the stupid mob who gape and will not think for themselves and are deceived by skulking figures whispering lies into their foolish ears. The mob that cries out catchwords put into their mouths whose meaning they do not understand. Before their eyes in all the centuries are the stately churches built to honor Him in the Host, crowded with adorers. There are multitudes whom He has fed in the wilderness, dead He has raised, sick whom He has healed. Before them always is the Holy Mass, a golden circle around the world, the sacrifice that saves the world. But their stupid minds inflamed by the crafty few cry out their catchwords and condemn Him their Savior.

Truly there is great need for our reparation to Him our loving God to make up for the stupidity, the ignorance and the malice of our fellow men, His creatures too and the objects also of His bounty. Let us make what reparation we can by receiving Him frequently in Holy Communion, by careful reverent hearing of Mass, by visiting Him in the Blessed Sacrament as often and as long as we can.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SECOND STATION OF THE CROSS

Our Lord is made to carry His Cross

CONDEMNED to the awful death of crucifixion, Our Lord is treated like the two criminals who were condemned to the same death and with them forms a procession that begins the journey to the place of execution. The soldiers are ranked in front and rear of the condemned, each of whom bears his cross upon his shoulders and has hung about his neck a white board on which is painted in black letters the offense for which he is condemned to die. About a hundred paces east of the Ecce Homo archway the cross is placed on Our Lord's shoulders and the march begins that is to end at Calvary. What a scene! The God of heaven and earth, worn and weak with the horrors of the night and early morning, faint from loss of blood shed in the cruel scourging, is obliged to bear on His shoulders the heavy weight of this great beam of wood. What love for us is in his humiliation! Made a companion of vile criminals He is subjected along with them to every shameful detail of the law's ritual. The Roman soldiers look on unmoved; it is a commonplace to them, part of the day's work. The chiefs of the Jews are exultant in the complete victory that has been given to them. The usual hangers-on of every crowd look curiously at the grave figure staggering under the weight of the cross. His angels crowd about Him, adoring Him in the midst of that unknowing mob.

Our whole nation was grateful to the men who for love of their country in the Great War risked their limbs and lives. This thankful appreciation was shown in wonderful

receptions to the survivors on their return home, and in monuments national and local to those who had fallen or come home maimed and wounded. All men honored those who gave themselves freely for the principles of the nation. Their acts and words were made history and won them glory. The man who braves death to save the life of a comrade, and the fireman who bravely faces death in the course of his duty, are justly hailed as heroes and given places of honor. There was nothing spectacular of this kind in the course Our Lord's love marked out for Him. How can we thank Him for the shame He chose instead to bear for love of us?

The picture of Our Lord at the Second Station must make us eager to show Him our love by some act of reparation for the dreadful torture He endured. We know from experience how painful a small cut on the hand or face can be, and how much the pain is aggravated if instant attention is not given to the injured part. Think of Our Lord, His whole body cut and bruised from the scourging. No care had been given even to one of the cuts that were so deep as to form severe wounds. As the thorns had pierced His forehead, the pain must have been intense. He was weak and faint from loss of blood, and He had had no rest all the night. We know what havoc a sleepless night can bring us; His whole night had been made a succession of nervous horrors and the early hours of the morning had been spent in traveling between the houses of the judges. To all this was added the mockery of the soldiers. What a wearied body it was Whose shoulders were now made the resting place for a huge cross of heavy wood!

When we are annoyed by bodily ills, wearied by vigils and faint from fatigue, let us think of this Station and make reparation by emulating the patience of Our Lord. When to the burdens of our life there is added an unexpected cross of heavy weight, let us make reparation by bearing it for love of Him whose wearied body took the cross for love of us.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE THIRD STATION OF THE CROSS

Our Lord Falls the First Time

OUR Lord was faint from hunger for He had eaten nothing since the early evening of the night before. All that night and the morning had been spent in the journeying between the houses of the judges, and in the harrowing scenes of mockery and insult to which He had been subjected. Worn in mind and body, He had been scourged with all the cruelty of savage soldiers to whom He was only a criminal to be punished. Thus weakened from loss of blood, aching from the pain of the unattended wounds of His body, His nerves shattered from the dreadful ordeals of the night, His soul sorrowful to death, the heavy load of the cross so crushed Him that He had gone only about two hundred paces when He slipped in the slime of the filthy lane, now called Sitti Mariam, and fell to the earth. What a horrifying spectacle! The God of Heaven and Earth, who holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, through love of us so weak and weary that He falls and lies prone in the dirt of the city street. What would have been a deeply ignominious posture in an ordinary man only brought out the dignity of Our Lord the more.

When the Spanish fleet on July 3, 1898, steamed out of the harbor of Santiago and was destroyed by the American war vessels, the flagship of Admiral Cervera was blown to pieces and the Admiral and some of his men were rescued by the Americans and taken on board Admiral Schley's cruiser. Garbed only in merest garment, barefoot and be-

draggled like the other rescued men, such was the natural nobility of Admiral Cervera that he was at once singled out from the others and saluted by the American Admiral. Richard Harding Davis records that what would have been a most ignominious plight for another, served Cervera as an occasion to show "the dignity of a Spanish gentleman."

When the racked and broken body of Blessed Edmund Campion was fastened to the hurdle and dragged at a horse's heels over the stones to Tyburn, he raised his head in passing the statue of the Blessed Virgin and saluted with his poor twisted hands in such respectful dignity that even the fanatical Protestants, who had been hooting him in his shameful plight were silenced. While the dreadful torture of the butchering was done to him the noble calmness of the martyr was such as to convert many of the onlookers.

From these instances we can judge how little the kingly dignity of Our Lord suffered even when He lay in the dirt of the streets worn and weary crushed beneath the cross. Let us adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament as His angels adored Him borne to the ground in Sitti Mariam that dread day.

Wearied as He was and heavily burdened by the great cross Our Lord rose up and began again the journey of love to Calvary. In this is the lesson of the Station for us all. We are burdened by the trials and cares of life, and worn in the fierce struggle. Sometimes there comes an added circumstance and we fall under the accumulation of our burden. Some slimy place on life's roadway, a Sitti Mariam, must be traversed, and worn and weary we can go no further, we stumble and fall. Wounded and sore in body, depressed in mind, we feel there is no use trying further. We cannot go on. Then comes to us the vision of the Third Station. Heavy as our cross may be, it cannot equal His. Worn and weary as we are, His faintness was greater; yet for love of us He rose up and took again the cross and persevered. Ah! so can we. As surely as we rise and go

on so surely God sends us instant reward. Just a few feet further from where He fell, just where the street Sitti Mariam opens out into the street El-Wad, Our Lord met His mother. So shall we meet comfort and strengthening if we rise up and persevere. Let us ask Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament to give us the grace to bear our cross bravely and patiently. To give us strength to rise again when through weakness we fall under it. To make us faithful to our duties no matter how unpleasant they may be or painful, as He was faithful to the duty of love He had undertaken for us.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FOURTH STATION OF THE CROSS

Our Lord meets His Mother

WITH most painful effort Our Lord had forced His bruised and aching body to rise again after the dreadful fall that had added new anguish to His torture. We know the nervous shock even a slight fall will give to us. Think then of this fall. Weary and worn, faint from hunger and thirst, the wounds of the scourging throbbing at every movement, the great cross pressing Him and His head aching in the heat of the near noontime sun, think of the shock when He falls! Steadfast in His divine purpose, when He had risen His tired eyes saw His mother, the dearest sight on earth to Him.

The Blessed Virgin had come with St. John and the holy women through a narrow alley leading from the temple building to the Street El-Wad, and reached the intersection just as the funeral procession came out of Sitti Mariam. Until then only the sullen faces of the soldiers and the hate in the eyes of the scribes and chief priests or the curious gaze of the crowd as they looked at the spectacle of a criminal being led to death, had Our Lord seen. It was sweet comfort indeed for Him now to see the loving sympathy of His mother and His friends, saddened though they were by the sight of His pain and misery.

To the crowd of curious onlookers Our Divine Lord was only a condemned criminal. Many must have pitied the handsome man in such affliction and wondered how He came to be in such a plight. Some must have recognized

the Wonder Worker whom they had seen curing the sick and raising the dead to life, and must have been filled with astonishment at seeing Him now a prisoner carrying the cross of death. The exulting Jews who saw in Him their enemy secured at last gloated over Him. The soldiers saw in Him one to be guarded and driven to His death. His mother and St. John and the Marys saw Him truly—the Lamb of God being led to the slaughter, and they adored Him with all the love of their great hearts, for they saw His God-Head beneath the shame of the cross.

To-day the unbelieving world sees the Sacramental Host as variously as did the crowd see Him that day at El-Wad. But we see His God-Head beneath the Sacramental Veils and with His mother and loving friends we adore Him on the altar. In the Blessed Sacrament Our Lord lives again mystically His life on earth. In the Holy Mass He is mystically offered again as sacrifice for the sins of the world and in the Blessed Sacrament He undergoes mystically all the detailed torture of the Way of the Cross. As He was consoled by the presence of His mother and His faithful friends who accompanied Him on the road to Calvary, and their constant loving sympathy and adoration made reparation for the cold curiosity of the crowd, the sullen indifference of the soldiers, and the hatred of the Jews, so can we console Him and make reparation by accompanying Him in spirit in the Blessed Sacrament; by keeping with us always the realization of His Presence in the Host; and by securing love and reverence for Him from others. A fruitful word to Protestants that will bring them to think of Him in the Blessed Sacrament may be ours to speak. Holy pictures can be hung in our houses that will serve as texts for instruction when seen and commented on by chance visitors who may admire them as works of art. A crucifix installed in the hallway with a holy-water stoup near by will attract attention and will secure interest by its novelty of position, and open the way to instruction of non-Catholics; give edification and good example to Catholics;

and be often the means of reviving religious memories, promoting penance, and overcoming temptation. Catholic books on the table of the living room with Catholic newspapers and magazines work the same good effects in exciting interest in Catholic affairs, besides supplying information and instruction. All these are exhibits of loyalty to Our Lord and active reparation for the insults and indifference of His own and of those who do not know Him.

With great love for Our Lord at this Fourth Station let us beg of Him to grant us the graces we need to be able to cheerfully bear our cross, and let us beg Him to grant us the sweet comfort of His holy mother's interest and loving sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FIFTH STATION OF THE CROSS

Simon the Cyrenean Helps Our Lord to Carry His Cross

WHEN a sick man sees his face by chance in a mirror he is shocked at the sight of the ravages his illness has made, and his physical pains seem more poignant as he views their effects in his lack-luster eyes, sunken cheeks, and waxen pallor.

On His way to Calvary, Our Lord's mind was centered solely on His great act of sacrifice. The soldiers, the mob, the hot street, and even the weight of the cross could not divert His thoughts from the end to be consummated. But when His eyes were drawn by the intensity of His mother's gaze, in her face as in a mirror He saw reflected the agony of His sufferings. Bravely He had looked into her sad eyes and caught their message of love and sympathy. It had been a great solace to see her once more, but when He was obliged to proceed on His way to death, the memory of her pitying love and anguish seemed to draw from Him the little strength remaining. So evident was His weakness that the executioners, alarmed lest He should die before they could crucify Him, impressed one of the onlookers to bear the cross behind Our Lord.

This fortunate individual was Simon, a Jew from northern Africa and a stranger in Jerusalem. He had all a rustic's repugnance to being made part of a public spectacle and felt keenly the disgrace of being compelled to help a criminal carry the despised cross of execution. Yet the

weight of that cross was the accolade of sainthood for Simon, and when in after years he and his sons, Rufus and Alexander, preached Christ's gospel in Spain, great glory was his and theirs because the Roman soldiers had compelled him to carry the cross of Our Lord. All unsuspecting the wonderful thing awaiting him, Simon had come from his distant home intent only on the business that brought him to Jerusalem. God's grace had guided him that day into making one of the crowd looking curiously on the unwonted sight at the city's gate. The compulsion of the Roman soldiers was a special grace for him. Had he been allowed to refuse, had he named his son a substitute, had he run away, what a loss would have been Simon's.

As we go on our way of life selfishly engrossed in our own affairs without thought of the needs of others it may happen to us as to Simon, that we come unexpectedly on one heavily laden with a great cross. It may be that death has widowed a neighbor, or misfortune has afflicted a friend, or sickness come to one of our family. Whatever it be it is a great grace that God sends us to help by sharing the weight of that cross for "as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me" (Matthew xxv. 40).

Often circumstances may make this helping as repugnant to us as it was to Simon. The bright-faced girl whose winning ways and charming presence promised all happiness in marriage may be transformed by the travail of childbearing and the nervous strain of wedded life into a shrill-voiced shrew. The manly hopeful young husband whose very voice and bearing presaged a successful future may have sunk gradually through evil associates and too great self-confidence into the degrading depths of drunkenness. The son or daughter whose soul and body were the constant care of loving parents, cheerfully making sacrifices that their offspring would have the advantages that fate had deprived themselves of, may prove bitterest disappointment in the years of manhood or womanhood by their in-

gratitude, or through shameful deeds bring disgrace to the family name. What a cross to bear is any of these! It is difficult to look with charity or to treat kindly the offender whose life has become a sword of sorrow in the loving soul of the disappointed and disillusioned one. But just this kind of cross-bearing can make saints of us all. However hateful to our natural feelings it is to help and however much we resent the cruel fate that mars the smoothness of our life, the very ties of blood and affection that compel us to carry such a cross are playing the part of the Roman soldiers who forced Simon the Cyrenean.

God's ways are not our ways and the cross-weighted figures that meets us whom pity compels us to aid, or the miserable unfortunate whom our pride or memory forces us to assist may be as God's ladder to bring us nearer to Him. St. Monica is not the only mother whose wayward son brought her a high reward in eternity, nor St. Elizabeth of Hungary the only wife whose patient bearing of the cross of matrimony won her sainthood. Every priest has seen a seemingly weak and aimless wife become a tower of strength to the tempted and spineless husband, and a matter-of-fact and ordinary man made a hero before God in his fortitude under the cross of a frivolous or slatternly wife. Every priest has bowed in spirit of obeisance at the wide-armed charity and flooding love of an aged father or mother whose prayers and sacrifices plead to God in penance for an erring child, and with no rancor or resentment awaits the return of the prodigal sure that God's mercy will make their pleading a mantle of protection to the sinner so dear to them.

The pagan world that seeks surcease from its crosses in the divorce court or by the weapon of murder or suicide cannot understand the miracles of patience and charity that God's grace is working under their eyes through the sacraments of His church. Could they but lift the veil from the hearts around them, what a vision they would behold of the vast army of Cyreneans bearing bravely the crosses

of others in their daily life, strong in the strength of their nearness to Christ.

In the Blessed Sacrament they have Him, the Cross-bearer by excellence, who bore the cross of all the world. From Him in Holy Communion and in visits to the Blessed Sacrament they learn the sweetness of cross-bearing and come to see Him in the weary cross-bearers around them, and are eager to gain, as Simon did, the wonders of reward that God gives to those who help in carrying the cross.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SIXTH STATION OF THE CROSS

Veronica Wipes the Face of Our Lord

ABOUT a hundred and ten paces from where Simon had been pressed into helping Our Lord to carry the cross, stood the house of a pious woman, a member of the family of Herod, and who, tradition teaches, was the woman whom Our Lord had cured of the issue of blood. As she saw Him in His piteous plight all her womanly sympathy went out to the sufferer and regardless of the soldiers and wondering crowd she went to Our Lord with a napkin and wiped His face soiled as it was with dust of the street and with dry blood from the wounds of the thorns.

Our faith in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist secures for us the privilege of honoring and serving Him as Veronica did. Her grateful love and sympathy saw in Him not the disgraced criminal laboring under a cross, but the great benefactor who had healed her. She was not content with mere pity but put her sympathy into act by coming to His aid and wiping His holy face. Our faith and love make us see in the Host the living body of Our Lord and we know Him as our benefactor and friend and deem it a privilege to be of service to Him.

Men are flattered when they are allowed the privilege of being of service to the important ones of the world. Families boast of an hereditary privilege that permits them to act as menials to their kings and are jealous of the right to do most servile ministering to them. We should be proud of our privilege of being permitted to come near Our Lord and wait on Him, the King of Kings.

When Our Lord had risen from the dead, Veronica was filled with great thanksgiving for the wonderful privilege that had been hers, and that won for her the holy envy of the less fortunate and the respect of the Church in all ages. We, too, should be most thankful for the high honor that is ours, because through our Catholic faith we can be of service to Our Lord.

Many had great sympathy for Our Lord that day in Jerusalem and wept silently at sight of His distress. They saw Him weak and faint and longed to go to His aid, to speak words of comfort and wipe from His holy face the traces of His pain. Veronica acted out the desire in her heart and made clean the face of Christ. Her kind act was reparation for the apathy of the others and Our Lord placed the seal of His approval upon it by giving her the imprint of that sad face for souvenir.

Constant occasions arise in our life to emulate Veronica. Our Lord is insulted by the unbelief and mockery of men and the neglect and carelessness of those who do believe but who do not act out that belief. We can, as Veronica did, make reparation to Him spiritually by hearing Mass with attention and when we have opportunity, and by frequent Holy Communion and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. We can make reparation materially by providing vestments and ornaments for the altar or by contributing to the church society whose object is to provide clean linens and the necessary furniture for celebrating Mass. Missionary priests are often obliged to say Mass where it is impossible to secure even decent equipment and with linens and vestments that are far from becoming. By contributing to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, to the Church Extension Society, and to our parish Altar Society we can imitate in most beautiful manner the great example of the brave Veronica.

Many have a great desire to make the altar attractive, and see with sorrow Mass celebrated in old and worn vestments, or the Sacraments administered with unkempt sur-

plice. It is in their power to change all this as it was in the power of those who pitied Our Lord at the Sixth Station and who failed to help Him. Veronica acted and did help and gained the reward the others lost. How bitterly they regretted their inaction! Let us not put ourselves in their place and have nothing but regret. Rather like Veronica let us take advantage of the opportunity by a generous charity toward the upkeep of the altar and the proper maintenance of divine worship.

Encouraged by Our Lord's infinite reward to Veronica, let us beg Him to show us how we can help Him as she did and put our desire into act and receive from Him the return of His gratitude for our service to Him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Our Lord Falls the Second Time, and Meets the Woman of Jerusalem

THE procession in its slow and sad march had passed through the gate of the second city wall, and had now come into the open country. The groups that had followed the cortège out of curiosity or sympathy from the city were augmented by others from among those who were trafficking at the marts close to the city's gate. Many of these were women who gazed with wet eyes at the grewsome sight of the anguish and pain of Him whom they had seen so often healing the sick, and whose wonderful words they had heard as He taught in the temple. In silence they watched, for it was forbidden by law to show any sign of sympathy or regret to those who were condemned to death on the cross. Before them in plain sight was Calvary, the hill of death, and as their eyes fondly followed the movements of Our Lord approaching the place of execution, suddenly His weakened body succumbed and He fell to the ground. As the cruel soldiers struck Him and pulled Him to His feet again, the women despite the law burst into a loud Oriental wail of anguish at the harrowing sight and rushed forward to His assistance.

Our Lord appreciated their sympathy but His tired eyes saw in them a type of the emotional Jewish nation that had rejected His message and now too late could weep over the pain that their timely confidence and love could have averted. He knew that many of these very women would

live to see the horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem, the penalty brought on itself by their stiff-necked generation. Therefore, He said to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke xxiii. 28).

The words of reproachful pity Our Lord spoke to the women of Jerusalem He is saying also to us. "Weep not over me but weep for yourselves and for your children." The world of to-day cannot understand any more than the world of His day could understand the need of vicarious suffering for sin. After His Resurrection He said to the disciples on the way to Emmaus: "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 25, 26). The disciples had earned this reproach because even they had not learned the enormity of sin and the callousness of the sinner who "drinketh in iniquity like water."

The pagan world of to-day is hysterical in its dread of suffering. It grows maudlin in its sympathy for the poor and those in pain. It cannot understand that resignation to God's will and patient suffering of pain and privation are commendable in God's sight. They do not know the meaning of John Boyle O'Reilly's words: "The only beautiful thing in the city is the patient lives of the poor." Their mawkish sentimentality finds vent in plays and books picturing from their distorted viewpoint the awful lives of nuns and priests. This would be amusing if it were not so tragic. The women of Jerusalem saw only Our Lord's suffering and missed the point that He the Son of God was suffering vicariously for the sinful thoughtless world of which they were part; that He was the most heroic figure in the history of the world; not an object of pity but God to be worshiped on bended knees in thanksgiving for His love and sacrifice.

So the ignorant world sees men and women give themselves to the heroic service of their fellow man. It sees

holy women relinquish wifehood and motherhood for the crucifixion of the schoolroom, or go into foreign lands carrying the cross of exile and scourged by the privations of a missionary's life. It sees men gifted beyond their fellows live the drab cheerless life of celibates, wearing themselves out in teaching the Gospel at home and abroad, giving their best gifts for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom on earth in erecting churches, schools, and institutions of charity—and the world misses the point. It does not know that "the end of life is not happiness but usefulness." It sees only the cross-ladened figure and the jeering crowd, but it does not see the heroic vicarious suffering for the heedless sinful world. Nor can it understand the sweetness of pain and privation borne for the sake of Him who said: "Unless you take up your cross daily and follow me, you cannot be my disciple."

To the world the maddest puzzle, and to the religious the plainest truth, are the poet's words:

"O Christ, if there were no hereafter,
Still it were best to follow Thee;
For tears are a better gift than laughter,
Who bears Thy yoke alone is free!"

To us to whom is given in our Catholic faith the key to God's secrets, the duty of penance for our sins and the sins of the world is most clear. The words of Our Lord to the women of Jerusalem are an invitation to be heeded. If we cannot imitate the heroic lives of the contemplative and the missionary, we can each in a way obey in our own life the command of Our Lord to do penance, and in so doing bring joy to ourselves here and eternal reward hereafter. Daily presence at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, frequent Holy Communion with Our Lord Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, observance of the laws of Holy Church in abstinence and fasting, constant prayer—these are answers to the call of Our Lord to ourselves, and the unthinking world, and its "consciously unmortified lives."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NINTH AND TENTH STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Our Lord Falls the Third Time and Is Stripped of His Garments

TRADITION tells us that Our Lord fell a third time at the foot of Mount Calvary, and though the Sacred Scriptures do not record this fall, the narrative describes the last stage of the journey in such words that we gather He must have been entirely bereft of His strength and powerless, "and they bring him into the place called Golgotha, which being interpreted is the place of Calvary" (Mark xv. 22).

There was among the Jews a society of pious women who sought to palliate the dreadful sufferings of those condemned to crucifixion by administering to them drugged wine just before they were nailed to the cross. With brain numbed to lethargy by the narcotic, the crucified man was less conscious of the awful agony he endured. Our Divine Lord of course would not diminish in the least the fullness of the generous gift of His life for the world. When He was offered the wine mixed with myrrh He tasted it as evidence that He knew the purpose of the drink, but refused to avail Himself of the opportunity to escape even a portion of the sufferings that awaited Him. Clear-eyed and clear-brained He looked on the harrowing preparations for His death, as the soldiers went through the routine of getting the nails and hammers in order and dug the trench in which the cross would be placed, tested the ropes and made all ready for the sacrifice. These gruesome details

completed, they came to Him for the final ignominy and stripped Him of His garments. "From the top of His head to the sole of His feet there was no soundness in Him." His beautiful body was crisscrossed with the welts of the scourges, and fresh blood flowed from the new wounds made where His garments had dried to His flesh in the clotted blood.

The soldiers were unconscious of the sacrilege, to them it was part of the day's work, but a sword of sorrow was plunged into the heart of the Blessed Virgin at the sight of His comely body so disfigured. Her mother eyes saw Him again the pink-skinned Child whose sweet flesh she had washed and fondled in those days so long ago when "she was kissed by God in Galilee." What pity filled her soul for the poor ignorant men who as they desecrated that body did not know the enormity of their crime.

In the Blessed Sacrament Our Lord lives over again His life amongst men. The desecration He suffered on Calvary when He was stripped of His garments has been repeated often in the ages of His life on our altars, and is, alas, repeated in our own times.

To take but one illustration from history, let us recall the storied glory of His garments in the Church of England before the rebellion of the sixteenth century. Wonderful cathedrals and parish churches then cried out in stone and iron the love of the builders for their Sacramental King. There is a never-to-be-forgotten description in Cardinal Newman's sermon, "The Second Spring," of the processions that wound their way through the countryside in adoration of the Sacred Host borne in triumph by richly robed churchmen amid His loving and devout children. Feast Days saw the pageants and the joy of a religious people so close to God that they felt their faith secure even if their Kings quarreled with the Pope. What beautiful garments of adoration and reparation were those thus woven by loving faith to clothe the God of their altars. Then came the cataclysm. "He was stripped of His gar-

ments.'' The altars were overthrown, the cathedrals sacked. No more Mass, no more processions. The saddened people saw and did not understand. Cardinal Manning has written: ''The grown people in the time of Queen Elizabeth felt at first the loss of the Holy Sacrament when the altars were thrown down, but the children soon became accustomed to the empty churches.'' Christ's body stripped of His garments was hidden in ignoble places, where the faithful worshiped Him desecrated by the ignorant servants of an impious king.

In our times we are saddened by the published opinions of men in high places, leaders in Israel and teachers of the young, who deny the divinity of Our Lord, distort His revealed word, and thus strip Him of His garments.

In the quiet hours we spend in our lonely churches our hearts are heavy at the thought of the many who in their ignorance imitate the soldiers of Calvary and strip Him of His garments in their lives. Men give time and energy to vain pursuits rather than to God's service. A perfunctory attendance at Mass, a hurried Holy Communion betimes are thought to be enough for God. The time of the Holy Hour, the many occasions of a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in passing a church, the sweet moments of Benediction are neglected, and thus Christ is stripped of His garments. It remains for those who truly love, to make reparation; to clothe Him in richest garments of love and reverence and devotion by frequent Holy Communion, by devout hearing of many Masses not of obligation, by faithful attendance at the Holy Hour, and by daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER XXX

THE ELEVENTH STATION OF THE CROSS

Our Lord Is Nailed to the Cross

THE cross was erected in its place and made firm to hold His weight. Then bound by cords about His body and under His arms, Our Lord was lifted up on the cross to the support that was placed about the middle of the vertical beam, and which held the Crucified so that His weight would not drag the nails through the flesh of the hand. His arms were stretched out on the horizontal beam and held by cords while the huge nails were driven through the palm. In like manner the great spike was driven through the flesh of the feet. To nail the prisoner first to the cross and set it in place afterwards was very exceptional. The early Fathers of the Church who saw actual crucifixions, for this dreadful form of death was in use many years after Our Lord's death, testify that in Our Lord's crucifixion the ordinary method was followed. St. Irenæus, St. Justin, and Tertullian describe the sedile which held the body's weight, although this has never been reproduced in Christian art, as forming part of Our Lord's cross. Martigny in his *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes* is authority for the absence of the suppedaneum, or support under the feet which was not used in Roman crosses.

While the soldiers, hardened by usage to such cruelties, were driving the great nails in His hands and feet, Our Divine Lord breathed that wonderful prayer, the first of His dying words on His Throne of Pain: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34).

Silent resignation in this as in all the other cruelties of the night and morning would have been divine heroism. But the Christian world of all time must know the inwardness of the Great Act, and so the voice that had thundered on Sinai now whispered a prayer of forgiveness and the "Lex Talionis" of the Old Law gave way before the new Law of Love, "Father forgive them." That sentence was the sublimation of the Three Years' words and works.

"They have pierced my hands and feet," the Psalmist had prophesied, and the prophecy was fulfilled on Calvary when the pagan soldiers drove cruel nails into the sacred flesh of Our Lord. In all the days since that sad day the prophecy is fulfilled when the Mystic Body of Christ is pierced with the nails of heresy. Not pagan soldiers but proud priests and greedy kings have done outrage to the church for their own selfish ends and mutilated the hands and feet of the Lord by causing a defection of nations from the Church.

While the soldiers did their dreadful deed every movement was watched by the Blessed Virgin and her devout companions who stood in silent awe in sight of the cross. Each blow of the hammers thudded their souls. They were powerless to prevent the sacrilege, but they had learned well the axioms of the Master and full of great pity for the blind ones who did the outrage they prayed for them.

We are saddened by the atheism, the heresy, and infidelity in the world and are obliged to look on helpless at the national evils of divorce, the infamy of child labor, and the oppression of the poor. We see the disloyalty of Catholics who marry in defiance of the Church's law and the stubborn disobedience of parents who deprive their children of a Catholic education or neglect the surveillance that would form habits of faithfulness to the Church's teachings. Thus we are forced to look on at the nailing of Christ's hands and feet. Our altar is Calvary and the *mise-en-scène* is the same. Like the faithful group of His friends, we can pray for the blind ones who do these evils

or condone them. At daily Mass we can beg saving grace of conversion for the offenders, and while there may always be the dicing soldiers oblivious of the miracle beside them, and the blaspheming Gesmas railing at his Savior, our prayers will surely find answer in a repentant Dismas and a Centurion stumbling down the hill in the darkness, crying out, "Indeed this was the Son of God" (Matthew xxvii. 54).

CHAPTER XXXI

THE TWELFTH STATION OF THE CROSS

Our Lord Dies on the Cross

LET us picture to ourselves the scene of that great sacrifice when Christ the great High Priest offered Himself on the altar of the cross and having fulfilled all the prophecies, "crying with a loud voice said: Father into thy hands I commend my spirit, and saying this he gave up the ghost" (Luke xxiii. 46).

From noon until the third hour after, the intense suffering of the Crucifixion lasted. It is only by comparison we can make ourselves realize how intense was that suffering. It has been our experience to suffer pain in some portion of our body either from a wound or disease. The whole body of Our Lord was lacerated. We have known how severe a pain can be when we have lain on a comfortable bed with anxious attendants seeking every means of alleviation for us. Our Lord's body was stretched and nailed. We have known the pain of aching muscles holding an arm at right angles from our body will cause. Our Lord's arms were nailed to the cross for three hours. We have suffered headache from want of food or from exposure to the heat of the sun and have sought relief in a darkened room on a soft pillow. Our Lord had taken no food from the early evening of the night before, and the full rays of the sun had beaten on Him in the streets and on the cross, and the sharp thorns pierced His throbbing brow.

Suffering is the appreciation of pain, and therefore men

are given opiates to dull this appreciation. An aching tooth pains no more in the twentieth than in the first moment of its infliction, but our appreciation of the continuance of the pain makes it seem more severe. Our Lord's mind was perfectly clear and appreciated to the fullest every throb of pain that racked His body. In his sermon on the "Mental Sufferings of Our Lord in His Passion," Cardinal Newman says: "It is the intellectual comprehension of pain as a whole diffused through successive moments, which gives it its special power and keenness. As men are superior to brute animals, and are affected by pain more than they, by reason of the mind within them, which gives a substance to pain; so in like manner Our Lord felt pain of the body with an advertence and a consciousness and therefore with a keenness and intensity and with an unity of perception, which none of us can possibly fathom or compass because His soul was so absolutely in His own power, so simply free from the influence of distraction, so fully directed upon the pain, so utterly surrendered, so simply subjected to the suffering."

As we visualize the dying moments of our loving Savior, let us consider the scene His tired eyes beheld, that even more than the unspeakable tortures He suffered made His soul "sorrowful to death."

Nearest to Him were the pagan soldiers who were casting lots for His clothing. "Either the world is being destroyed or God is suffering," another pagan was crying out at that moment far away, but these beside their God, gambled for His garments.

Near the cross and on the hillside and at the bottom of the low mount within sight of the cross, standing and walking about were the idlers of the city who had followed the procession out of curiosity or had hurried from the city at the news of a spectacle that would please their morbid taste. In contrast to this rag-tag and bobtail were the priests and scribes, conspicuous in their clean, well-cut garments, and very satisfied in their triumph. They

sauntered through the crowd, talking gleefully of their success; casting contemptuous looks at their Victim; blasphemously crying out their insults and inciting others to do likewise.

Many there surely were of that crowd who had been fed by Him in the desert in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes; some surely who had been healed or who had seen His healings, yet no word of theirs was uttered in protest of the foul crime. They were silent either from cowardice, or through a mistaken sense of expediency they joined in the savage ribaldry that mocked their Savior, as did the soldiers when they had tired of their gaming.

In the city beyond, the world went on about its business as if the world's greatest tragedy were not being enacted. Men and women bought and sold, ate and drank, sinned and prayed.

The loving eyes that had looked familiarly on the Twelve, to whom "it was given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven," now looked in vain for the comfort of their presence in His dying hour. One only He saw near His cross. Only one of the ten cleansed lepers had returned to give thanks in the days now gone, but surely this heart-breaking disproportion would not be true of His chosen friends, His companions of the Three Years. Yet it was so. The ten were skulking in the byways of the city, and even Peter who had said: "Though all forsake thee I will not forsake thee," was far away weeping and eating out his heart in remorse for the shameful triple denial; and the bursting body of the twelfth was hanging from a tree by the halter his belated conscience had tied about his neck, and purple in a suicide death were the lips that had given the traitorous kiss. What an anticlimax this to the scene of the Sunday before when He had entered the city by the road His eyes could trace from the cross, the center of a merry throng that flung their garments in His way, plucked down the palm branches and cried out as they

waved them joyously: "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel" (John xii. 13). No wonder there came to his lips the words of the piteous psalm of lament: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" (Mark xv. 34.)

His great human heart must, however, have one consolation at least in all that dreary waste of ingratitude. Therefore He permitted that He would have the comfort of the company of His blessed mother, and His faithful friends, the other Marys, John and the rose of penitence, Magdalene. In that sea of brutal, bestial, stupid, savage, leering faces there stood out these sweet countenances placid in their grief, pulsing with love. And as a lesson to the ages, comfort to us as well as to Him, was the adoration of Dismas, whose sin-blacked soul was whitened in its nearness to that Sacred Heart, and whose instant reward of humble contrition has been as a mighty staff of hope for sin-sick souls.

In the Blessed Sacrament Our Lord looks out from His golden throne and His loving eyes see a replica of that scene on Calvary. Human nature does not change, and men grow used to the miracle of the Host.

There are those who come to Him and are as near as were the soldiers, and like those pagans they are distracted with vain thoughts and lose the opportunity of great graces. Many come to Mass and to Benediction who have received as great favors as they who stood by the cross. They have been cleansed of sin again and again, they have been fed by the Holy Eucharist, they have received the favor of the gift of faith, and yet they assist at Mass dumb, without a word of thanks, satisfied to fulfill the obligation of being present. Or they come to the other services of the church in most perfunctory manner, while many of these who have been favored do not come at all. It is most sad to think of the great number who could attend daily Mass and the very many who could receive Our Lord every day and thus testify their love and devo-

tion, yet who absent themselves from sheer lack of interest.

As the life of Jerusalem went on that dread day without thought of Him on Calvary, so to-day the tide of the world sweeps by the Church in which stands and waits its God. Men sin and play, eat and drink, sleep and plan without thought of the wondrous mystery of the Eucharistic Life. So much strength is lost, so much grace missed by those who could without interrupting their daily tasks send a thought to Him many times in the day, and thus make a spiritual visit to their God who holds them ever in His thoughts.

Our Lord's human heart is grieved by this neglect and ingratitude, but it would be grieved more were it not for the faithful ones who like the little group on Calvary stand forth in great love and service. There are still faithful loving souls who make a sacrifice to be present each day at Mass, who so arrange their duties as to receive Holy Communion every day, who are found in all seasons and in all weather before Our Lord when there is public service, and who manage to visit Him in private for a loving word each day.

What a great privilege it is for them to know that as His tired eyes looked with loving joy on that group composed of His mother and her friends, so from the Host He sees and knows and looks for them as reparation for the carelessness of His others. The noise of the world beats loud against the church doors, but louder to Him are the sweet prayers of the loyal and true friends who whisper: "Spare, O spare thy people, O Lord." It is bitter indeed, bitter as the gall and vinegar, to see the empty church all day, and know how feeble is His love as an attraction against the apathy of those who fill the moving picture houses and the streets. But there are golden moments when He can go in Holy Communion into the very hearts of those who love Him and can listen to their words of comfort and consolation. "My delights are to be with the

children of men,'' He said, and His Sacred Heart delights indeed to be with His loving friend.

Calvary day by day with its sorrows and pains, its joys and consolations, its insults and mockeries, its prayers of love and forgiveness—as then when the noise of the rabble was not heard by Him and even the presence of His mother was not noticed, for He had said: ''These are My mother and My brethren,'' and ''I have come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel,'' so now the crowded church is not seen by Him, and for the moment the prayers of the faithful are not noticed by Him, for out of the crowd there has come, as came the sobbing whisper of the Good Thief on that day: ''Remember me, Lord,'' and the poor sinner who has responded to grace and has come to Mass and has lifted his arms in entreaty out of the blackness of the pit of his sins, hears the saving words of forgiveness and feels his heart burn within him. The joy of heaven over the sinner that doth penance flows from the Sacred Heart of Him who forgave Dismas, as He calls to the ninety-nine who need not penance: ''Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.''

Mystery of the miracle of the Mass where we stand and love and are forgiven! Wondrous mystery of the Host which ''sprinkles benedictions through the dawn,'' which blesses ''the earth with the due illustrious rite.''

O Salutaris Hostia,
Quæ cœli pandis ostium!

CHAPTER XXXII

THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Our Lord's Body Is Taken Down from the Cross and Laid in the Tomb

BEFORE the "great cry" mentioned by St. Matthew and St. Mark, all nature seemed hushed in a silence of expectancy. The darkness that had from noon been creeping round the mount and all of Judea deepened in a cloak of cloud that enveloped the city and country round about, and indeed the whole hemisphere. Dionysius, the Areopagite, put in words the fear of all men in that dread moment: "Either God is suffering or he is moved to pity at some great woe." As His passion had begun alone in Gethsemane, so it ended alone on the cross, for the silence and the darkness shut Him out from all the world, and not even the Evangelists who tell us of the Agony in the Garden dare speak of that Sacred Agony of the last moments of the Savior's life. Nor can human lips put in words the agony of His mother waiting in the darkness for the end. The holy women and the disciples afar off huddled together in wordless awe. Dismas, at His right hand waited for the fulfilling of the promise, his heart singing with joy. The Centurion and the Roman soldiers fidgeted uncomfortably in the gloom, and the Jews, terrorized, waited, for they knew not what dreadful thing. His muffled cry of anguish had added to their terror. "Ah, He calls on Elias," they said and shuddered, for well they knew Elias was to return to earth on a day of terror and blazing fire.

As under the olive trees the Vision of Sin had passed before His eyes and forced the first shedding of His Precious Blood in dread of the hideous thing, so now His mental glance took in all creation. He saw the righteous of the Old Law who would troop to their long delayed reward, and the just of the New Law, the saints of all ages and places, strong in the strength of the cross, serving God. He saw the sinners also of all ages and places creeping penitent to the cross and taking heart from the sight of the Crucified to rise up from their sins and walk straight before God. He now had the Vision of Man redeemed, made sacred with the crimson of the Precious Blood, marked with the new sign, gathering "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same" before the Divine Victim on the altar, bowing in loving adoration and gratitude before their God made Man who had died for them and yet lived ever in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Great Debt was paid. The Golden Way from Gethsemane to Calvary had been traversed. The Divine Traveler had reached His bourne and heaven's gates trembled on their hinges. It was the end, and His lips murmured the relief: "It is consummated."

Then came the "great cry" and all nature paid tribute for the sacrifice. The earth quaked and the temple's veil was rent asunder. The Centurion and his soldiers cried out: "Indeed this was the Son of God," and the Jews, stumbling in the darkness, fled in terror only to meet further terror as they saw the dead, whose graves had given them up, walk the streets.

Left alone on Calvary, the Blessed Mother and her companions with St. John gathered near their Dead. The disciples came close, and when the soldiers, sent by Pilate at the Jews' request, arrived they found Our Lord beyond the need of the blows that hastened the death of the two thieves, and the Scripture was verified: "Neither shall you break a bone thereof" (Exodus xii. 46). Moved by a force he could not know, for Our Lord was plainly dead, the

Centurion pierced His right side with a lance, and the Prophecy was fulfilled: "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (Zacharias xii. 10).

There now remained but to take down the body for interment with the instruments of execution, and as the soldiers were about this work, Joseph of Arimathea appeared on the scene. Rich and influential, he had lacked the courage to declare his faith in Our Lord, but now moved by the tremendous incidents of His death, he demanded a delay in the proceedings and, hurrying to Pilate, sought and obtained permission to take charge of the body. Accompanied by Nicodemus, who like himself had feared an open avowal before but now was eager to make amends for his weakness, Joseph returned to Calvary laden with linen cloths and rich perfumes and proceeded to prepare Our Lord's body for burial. During the waiting, Our Blessed Lady held the lifeless body of her Son in her weary arms. As she caressed that cold flesh what memories flooded her soul of the days in Nazareth when she held Him, an infant, in just such helplessness, and washed the soft yielding pink flesh, and felt the warmth of His life against her breast. Deep, indeed, was the sword of sorrow in her heart that pulsed beside the inert flesh so sorely torn. With what reverent kisses she touched the hands so cruelly pierced that once were as tiny flowers in her grasp before He had to go out and hold up all the world of sin with them. How tenderly she brushed back the matted hair that she had combed and brushed when it was like spun gold on His forehead, before the crown that marked Him King of Sorrows had scarred it crimson.

Now she must give Him to these weeping men who anointed Him in death as she had done in life so long ago. And as she had swathed Him in bands and folds that Christmas night when He first lay in her arms, and He was so small and so helpless, so now they swathed Him in long bands and folds and wrapped Him in a winding sheet. She had laid Him in a manger in the stable of a stranger, a

cave hollowed out of the hillside. Now they laid Him on a funeral couch in the burial cave carved in the cliff, that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, and the great stone was pushed against the door of the cave.

That night in Bethlehem His angels swirled and circled in glad song of praise, now His angels gathered silent, a celestial guard over the racked and torn body of the Babe of Bethlehem "wounded for our sins and bruised for our iniquities." Adoring that Sacred Flesh, the angels waited in long hours until the Easter Morn, when joyously they saw the miracle of miracles as He rose from the dead, whole, transfigured in the great beauty of His living body.

That beautiful body is with us in the Blessed Sacrament. His angels are with Him, and it is our blessed privilege to be allowed to share their worship and love for their God and ours. Greater privilege than that of Nicodemus and Joseph is ours. They anointed and wrapped Him dead and disfigured and laid Him in a tomb. We have Him in the Blessed Sacrament, true God and true Man, living and loving. Sweet as the spices and myrrh are our prayers of praise and love with which we anoint Him. By our devotion and sacrifice we enwrap Him; and not in a cold tomb in the hill side, but in the warmth of our hearts we lay that Precious Body when we receive Him in Holy Communion. As Joseph and Nicodemus knew the honor that was theirs to provide the cloths and ointments for His burial, so do we realize the great privilege we have in providing the sacred vessels, the altar cloths, the ornaments and necessities for the Mass.

Joseph gladly gave his property for resting place for his Lord's body. We gladly give most generously to provide and support the parish church that is the resting place of His living body and blood, soul and divinity in the Blessed Sacrament.

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